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1987

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THE LIFE & WORKS OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

(Le grand saint du grand siècle : Monsieur Vincent)

Translated from the French of PIERRE COSTE, C.M.

By

JOSEPH LEONARD, C.M.

VOLUME III

Published in the United States by New City Press the Publishing House of the Focolare 206 Skillman Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11211 ©1987 New City Press, New York

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 87-61617 ISBN 0-911-782-57-5 Printed in the United States of America

NIHIL OBSTAT:

EDUARDUS J. MAHONEY, S.TH.D., Censor deputatus.

> IMPRIMATUR: JOSEPH BUTT, Vicarius generalis.

CHAPTER XLIV

SPIRITUAL RETREATS .

The large number of those who make retreats at Saint-Lazare; retreats made there by Pavillon, Bourdoise, Guy Lasnier, the Abbé de Vaux, Keriolet, Olier; Saint Vincent at the disposal of those on retreat; spiritual exercises; the Director General; the book of meditations; the gratuitous nature of these retreats and the expenses incurred; interest displayed by Saint Vincent in those on retreat : instructions given to clerical students placed at the disposal of those on retreat; disinterestedness; prayers offered up by the Community; fruits of the retreats.

CHAPTER XLV

MISSIONS

Missions in country places, the proposed object of the Congregation of the Mission; qualities requisite for Missionaries; free Missions; authority of the parish priest over Missionaries; preparation for Missions; sermons and catechetical instructions; general communion; confessions of children; one day's rest a week; vacation-time; training of Missionaries; reports sent from the Missions; Saint Vincent's affection for this work; fruits of Missions; foundations.

Missionaries from Saint-Lazare at work in the dioceses of Paris, Montauban, Mende, Saintes, Bordeaux, Saint-Flour; with the armies; in parishes dependent on the Order of Knights of Malta; in the diocese of Toulouse, Angoulême, Sens; in Campagne and Normandy.

Labours of the Missionaries at Anneçy, Toul, Troyes, Saint-Méen, Treguier, Richelieu, Luçon, Montauban, Saintes, Rome, Genoa, Turin.

20

PAGE I

XLVI

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Charity schools in Paris and country places; free schools for young girls; teaching syllabus; rewards and punishments; measures taken to deal with those who were unable to attend.

CHAPTER XLVII

CHAPTER XLVIII

CHAPTER XLIX

THE ABBÉ DE SAINT-CYRAN Saint-Cyran's life before definitely settling in Paris; intimate relations with Saint Vincent; cooling of their friendship; heterodox remarks; Saint Vincent reminds the Abbé of the teaching of the Church; Saint Vincent interrogated; his written deposition; authenticity of the document; Saint-Cyran's interrogatory; funeral of Saint-Cyran.

CHAPTER L

THE HISTORY OF JANSEN'S 'AUGUSTINUS' The Augustinus delated to Rome and condemned; the two camps; Arnauld's book on Frequent Communion; Saint Vincent denounces and combats Jansenism at the Council of Conscience; his refutation of the errors contained in Arnauld's book; the Bull In eminenti; Arnauld's defence; the five propositions taken from the Augustinus; petition of the episcopate to the Pope; Saint Vincent collects signatures to the petition; his reply to the Bishops of Pamiers and Alet; counter offensive; the battle between the two parties continued at Rome; examination and condemnation of the five propositions; joy of Saint

113

144

PAGE 65

70

Vincent and of Alain de Solminihac; how the Bull PAGE was received in Paris; Saint Vincent's efforts to have it accepted; the distinction between 'matters of fact and matters of law.'

CHAPTER LI

CHAPTER LII

CHAPTER LIII

THE FIRST MONASTERY OF THE VISITATION ORDER AT PARIS

Acts Acquisition of the Hôtel de Cossé; Noël Brulart de Sillery, a benefactor of the monastery; foundations of branch convents; Sister Sevin; Sister de la Fayette, kindness of the King and Queen towards the Order; other foundations; hospitality afforded to Visitation nuns driven from their convents during the Fronde; burials in the convent chapel; some saintly Visitation nuns.

CHAPTER LIV

THE MONASTERY OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN . . . The refuge before 1629 of the Visitation nuns; new organisation; the effects of the divine grace on a number of the inmates; intolerable conduct of others; discouragement of the nuns; gifts for the work; beautiful example given by several nuns; their departure.

217

167

CHAPTER LV

THE SECOND MONASTERY OF THE VISITATION IN PARIS . 228 The beginnings of this convent; its poverty; Mother de Beaumont replaced by Mother Favre; gifts; nuns of great family and of remarkable virtue; a case of theft; additions to the building; another case of theft; confessors; conferences; establishment of branch houses; the Fronde; Mother Bouvard; guests of the Monastery; foundation of the monastery in the Rue Montorgueil.

CHAPTER LVI

CHAPTER LVII

Saint	VINCENT'S	Rel	ATIONS	WITH	Bouri	DOISE,	D'AUTH	IIER	
AND	OLIER .						•	•	257

CHAPTER LVIII

CHAPTER LIX

CHAPTER LX

THE SAINT

Saint Vincent's detachment from the goods of this world; its honours and esteem; his humility; his love of chastity; his mortification; his faith, hope and union with God; his zeal; his devotion to the Blessed Virgin; to the Saints; his Angel guardian and the soul in Purgatory; his carefulness in avoiding

291

PAGE

any injury to the reputation of others or of hurting PAGE their feelings by admonitions; his meekness, love of justice, and obedience; his charity towards the pastoral and regular clergy; his gratitude; detachment from relatives; his conduct towards those who had injured or shown him hostility; his charity to the poor.

CHAPTER LXI

THE MAN OF ACTION

Saint Vincent was endowed with those qualities that render action fruitful; his spirit of initiative; his timidity and courage; his genius for organisation; his recourse to God in prayer ; Jesus Christ his exemplar; his recourse to observation, experiment and consultation; his independence, patience, determination and perseverance in reaching his object.

CHAPTER LXII

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF SAINT VINCENT Hour for rising; toilet; prayer; repetition; the 'Little Hours'; Mass; breakfast; his apartment; the parlour; meetings; visits; meals; visits to the Blessed Sacrament ; the Divine Office ; the Angelus ; recreations; correspondence; night prayers; conferences; the end of the day.

CHAPTER LXIII

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL'S SPIRITUAL TEACHING His masters in the spiritual life; the characteristic note of Saint Vincent's spirituality; its practical nature; method of prayer; personal and corporate humility; the renouncement of one's own will, of one's own health, family and fatherland; two rules of action: the will of God and the imitation of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER LXIV

PORTRAITS The Saint's external appearance; portrait by Simon Françoys; engravings by Pitau, van Schuppen, Lochon, Edelinck ; the portrait in the Mother-House ; portrait in the possession of Durand des Aulnois; Sebastian Bourdon's painting; Angela Labory's drawing.

CHAPTER LXV

ILLNESSES AND DEATH Slight attacks of fever ; bouts of sickness in 1615, 1644, 1649, 1651 and 1665; a carriage accident; illness during 1658–1659; farewell to Cardinal de Retz and

376

336

354

326

to Father de Gondi ; extreme weakness of the lower limbs ; physical sufferings ; preparation for death ; remedies usually employed ; persons chiefly concerned with the state of his health ; his state of health in July-August, 1660 ; in September ; the last Sacraments ; his last agony ; death ; embalming ; funeral ; funeral service ; letters of sympathy.

CHAPTER LXVI

BEATIFICATION AND CANONISATION Beatification. Anticipated by the Saint's contemporaries; first steps taken in 1697; constitution of the Ordinary's tribunal; witnesses heard in Paris and the provinces; Process de non-cultu; postulatory letters ; documents taken to Rome ; translation, revision and copying; objections of the Promoter; abandonment of several minor processes; the Process in genere; the Process in specie ne pereant probationes; opening of the tomb; the apostolic process declared valid ; examination of Vincent de Paul's writings ; Congregation to examine the heroic practice of the virtues; a new examination of the writings; a postulatory letter from the clergy of France, fresh objections raised by the Promoter; delays; the heroic nature of the virtues admitted; miracles, Brief of Beatification; opening of the coffin; cost of the process.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE RELICS

The Saint's body. Before the Revolution; during and after the Revolution; translation of the relics in 1830; the body removed to Roye; the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; the body during the Commune; the body in Belgium; its return to Paris.

CHAPTER LXVIII

SAINT VINCENT'S PLACE IN THE LITURGY Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul; his office; Feasts of his death, of the Translation of the Relics and of his patronage of works of charity; devotion shown to the Saint at Pouy, Château-l'Evêque, Clichy, Folleville, Châtillon and Paris.

CHAPTER LXIX

THE SAINT'S BIOGRAPHERS	•	•	•		475
Abelly, Collet, Maynar	d and	Boug	aud.		175

INDEX

.

433

401

PAGE

х

462

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME III

A Contemporary Portrait of St. Vincent de Paul $_F$	ronti	spiece
LOURS XIII		раде 70
	•	70
LOUIS XIV AS A CHILD	•	95
The Abbé de Saint-Cyran	•	113
Cornelius Jansen	•	138
Anthony Arnauld	•	158
Francis Stephen de Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers	•	175
St. Jane Frances de Chantal	•	210
The First Visitation Convent in Paris	•	227
The Second Visitation Convent in Paris	•	250
The "Madelonette" Convent, Paris		286
FATHER CAUSSIN, S.J		314
An autograph Letter of St. Vincent de Paul	•	346
Andrew Duval, Doctor of the Sorbonne .	•	368
MIRACLES WROUGHT THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF	δт.	
VINCENT	•	410
SILVER CASKET CONTAINING THE BODY OF ST. VINCEN	т	433
CHAPEL AT ST. VINCENT DE PAUL'S BIRTHPLACE .	•	457
Louis Abelly	•	477

4

(

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

PRESENT this translation of 'Monsieur Vincent, le grand saint du grand siècle,' in all filial reverence and affection, to his eighteenth successor in the office of Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity, the Most Reverend Charles L. Souvay. I wish to take this opportunity of thanking my distinguished confrère, Père Coste, for his prompt and valuable assistance in reply to my enquiries and especially for supplying me with advance copies of lists of errata and minor textual alterations by which this translation is brought into line with the second edition of his work; to Rev. Kevin Cronin, C.M., Collège Irlandais, Paris, for generously devoting his spare leisure to compiling the index; to the directors of Messrs. Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., and especially to Dr. Denis Gwynn, for the great courage and enterprise they have shown in undertaking the publication of these three large volumes, and, finally, to Mrs. O'Connor, Villa Nova, Cork, for not only reading the entire script and proofs but for many valuable suggestions, most of which are incorporated in the work for which, however, I alone am responsible.

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SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

CHAPTER XLIV

SPIRITUAL RETREATS

Sefficacious means of moral and religious improvement, or of a return to the path of duty if one has strayed away from it. At all times the Saints, especially Saint Ignatius of Loyola, have realised this truth, but few have succeeded as fully as Saint Vincent de Paul in extending this salutary practice.

The first person to make a retreat under his direction was John Coqueret, a doctor of the College of Navarre and Principal of the Collège des Grassins. Coqueret subsequently sent his pupils to Saint Vincent,¹ and gradually others presented themselves. In various quarters persons began to speak of the friendly welcome given, first at the Bons-Enfants and then at Saint-Lazare, to those who went to either place to spend a few days in prayer and recollection, and in a short time, the number had grown considerably. On February 20, 1640, there were eighteen on retreat ;² in 1658, Saint Vincent stated that, 'as a rule there were eight or ten ecclesiastics and as many laymen on retreat '.³ The annual total of persons on retreat in the house of Saint-Lazare alone mounted up to seven or eight hundred. Persons flocked to it from the most distant parts of the country, and all were admitted without distinction of class : Bishops, Presidents of the Parliament, doctors of the Sorbonne, Magistrates, members of the pastoral and regular clergy,

¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XII, p. 437.

² Ibid., Vol. II, p. 22.

⁸ Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 298.

soldiers, working-men and domestic servants. Women alone were excluded, but another house of retreats was open for them in the Mother-House of the Daughters of Charity.

Among those who made a retreat were many who simply went to stir up their devotion and to gain an increase of moral strength that they might persevere in a life of virtue. but others were drawn for a specific motive. Amongst these were sinners resolved to walk again in the path of duty, young men preoccupied with the thought of choosing a special way of life, prelates on the eve of receiving episcopal consecration, careless or undevout religious sent there by their Superiors to be led by the influence of divine grace to a reformation of their lives. 'I beseech you,' said Saint Vincent on one occasion to his disciples, 4 ' to thank God for the inclination which He has given to so many persons to make a retreat here, for the number is marvellous; to all those ecclesiastics, both from the city and the country, who leave everything to do so; to all those persons who throng here asking to be admitted and who, for a long time previously, urgently begged to be received here. What a great motive for praising God ! Some come and say to me : "Sir, I have been asking this favour for a long time : I came here over and over again without being able to obtain it : " others say : "Sir, it is absolutely necessary for me to leave Paris; I have a duty to perform elsewhere ; my benefice awaits me ; grant me this favour; " others again : " I have finished my studies and am obliged to withdraw and reflect over what I should do," and still others : "Sir. I am in great need of it; oh ! if you only knew, you would speedily grant me this favour."

In addition to personal requests, there were letters; every time Saint Vincent opened his post-bag he found new petitions made in such a manner, either for the individual himself or for others, as to show the benefit to be expected from these retreats. An ecclesiastic from Orleans wrote to him : 'I beg you, for the love of God and the Blessed Virgin, to allow me to make another retreat in your house. I do nothing but sigh after it. . . When I reflect on the thoughts and feelings that are conceived in your house I am as it were ravished out of myself, and can do naught but wish that God

⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 229.

may be pleased that all priests shall carry out these holy exercises. If that were so, we should not see all the bad example given by many to the great scandal of the Church.' 'The fruits gathered by those who have carried out the exercises of a spiritual retreat in your house,' wrote a country parish priest, 'spread such a sweet odour in all those places to which they are borne that they arouse in the souls of many a desire to go and gather similar fruits for themselves from the same tree. As I have observed one of my near relations cherishing such a desire, I have come to the conclusion that I could do him no greater good than to very humbly request you to be pleased to receive him into your house to carry out the exercises of a spiritual retreat.'

The Baron de Renty, after exhausting all the means at his disposal to bring a parish priest who was leading a disorderly life to a sense of his duty, bethought himself of the wonderful conversions effected at Saint-Lazare, and begged Saint Vincent to accept the ecclesiastic amongst his retreatants. The superior of a religious community in Paris sent him, for the same reason, a member of his Order who was in charge of a parish. 'This good man,' he wrote, 'stands in great need of an amendment of his life, which has hitherto been rather disorderly, to the prejudice of the souls under his charge. He has been recommended to retire to your house as a place of safety for souls, and an admirable means of setting them once more on the path of duty. I very earnestly beseech you . . . to admit him.' In addition to sinners there were heretics who wished to receive a course of religious instruction before abjuring their errors. Parisian religious wrote to Saint Vincent : 'I am sending you a person well worthy of your charity; he is a page of the Prince de Talmont and has hitherto been educated in the false Calvinist religion ; he came to me to be converted, but as I am not sufficiently competent for such a great work, I have summoned up courage to turn to you as to one on whom God has bestowed special and very great graces for His glory and for the salvation of sinners and wanderers.'5

Saint Vincent did not wait to be asked as a favour to admit persons to Saint-Lazare to make a retreat; he

⁵ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. IV, Sect. IV, pp. 284-286.

himself suggested this means of sanctification to those who in his eyes were in need of it. During the famines caused by the Fronde, as he was riding one day through Paris, a man publicly upbraided him for being the cause of the taxes under which the people were crushed. He at once dismounted, knelt down in the street and begged his accuser to forgive him for his misdeeds. The man, taken aback by this act of humility, went the next day to Saint-Lazare to excuse himself for having publicly insulted the Saint, but Vincent de Paul welcomed him as a true friend and succeeded in inducing him to remain for a week so as to prepare, by the exercises of a retreat, for a good general confession. He revenged himself in the way that saints are wont to do.6

Many of those who made retreats have left a name in history. In May or June 1632, amongst the retreatants were 'a bishop-elect, a First President, two doctors of divinity, a professor of theology, and M. Pavillon.'7 The latter, who was subsequently appointed to the see of Alet, made the retreat preparatory to his consecration in Saint-Lazare.8 The Priory also had the happiness of affording hospitality to Adrian Bourdoise who, in his humility, had come to believe that his absence from Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet would be useful to his community, and wished to prolong his retreat for several months. After some days, Saint Vincent, at the request of the Nicolaites, succeeded in persuading Bourdoise that it would be better to return home.⁹ Amongst those on retreat in 1653 was Guy Lasnier, one of the holiest ecclesiastics of the diocese of Angers. 10 example was followed by Peter de Keriolet, the famous His Breton penitent, and, in the eighteenth century, the little room he had occupied at the end of the seminary was still pointed out to visitors.¹¹ The Venerable M. Olier, before leaving for Auvergne to evangelise the parishes dependent

⁶ Abelly, op. cit., Vol. III, Ch. XI, Sect. VII, p. 170.
 ⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 157.

⁸ Ibid., p. 237, note 5.
⁹ Vie de M. Olier, par Faillon, 4th ed., Paris, 1873, 3 vols. oct., Vol. I, p. 93.

¹⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 211.

11 La vie de Saint Vincent de Paul, par Collet, Vol. I, p. 282.

on his Abbey of Pebrac, prepared himself for the task by ten days of silence and recollection at Saint-Lazare.¹²

Saint Vincent had not enough time at his disposal to impart spiritual guidance to all who made a retreat ; vet he did so, as far as his occupation permitted, at the request of those who were in special need of his advice or who held important positions, alike in Church or State. Before recommending the exercise of a particular virtue to those who consulted him he was accustomed to ask what was their predominant passion. To this question a doctor of divinity, who went to make a retreat every year at Saint-Lazare, replied : 'You have given me something to think about, sir; however, I shall say in reply that we who come from the North are very little subject to the passions. This is not to say that we have none, but commonly speaking, we have not.' Saint Vincent was much struck by the accuracy of the remark and referred to it later during a repetition of prayer. His motive for asking the question was his belief that the predominant passion is the source of a person's most usual faults and a retreat is primarily intended to eradicate sin and sinful habits. 'By this word Spiritual Retreat or Spiritual Exercises we are,' he wrote, ' to understand a cessation from all temporal affairs and occupations so that we may seriously devote ourselves to a clear knowledge of our inner life, to a careful examination of conscience, to meditation, contemplation, prayer and such a preparation of soul as to purify ourselves from all sin, all evil habits and affections, to acquire an ardent love for virtue, to seek and to know the will of God, and, having known it, to submit, conform and unite ourselves to it, and thus tend to advance and finally to arrive at our own perfection.'18

These words enable us to form a judgement as to what exercises were prescribed for persons on retreat. They began at four o'clock in the morning and went on until nine o'clock at night. The order of day prescribed certain hours for examinations of conscience, mental prayer and spiritual reading from the *Imitation of Christ*, the writings of Louis of Granada, and other books recommended by the director.

¹² Faillon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 93.

18 Abelly, op. cit., Vol. II, Ch. IV, Sect. I, p. 270.

These readings supplied the place of sermons or instructions which could not, it was thought, be delivered, seeing that retreats were constantly in progress and bearing in mind the variety and comparatively small number of persons on retreat at the same time. A general confession of the individual's whole life, or at least, since his preceding general confession, was the chief thing to be considered. Each retreatant, during his prayer and meditations, directed his attention to his own special needs and the duties of his state in life. When the retreat was undertaken for a particular motive, as for instance, to seek light on the choice of a career or to eliminate a particular vice or failing, then every effort was directed towards that end.

Between 1641 and 1646, René Alméras was director general of retreats. His biographer states that he drew up 'most of the rules' and jealously watched over their application. He was ever severe towards such of his subordinates as were careless in the observance of their duties.¹⁴

Saint Vincent quickly perceived that it would be advisable to place a set of meditations in the hands of those on retreat to assist them to make mental prayer. He chose a work of which he had a high opinion, the meditation of the Jesuit Father Busée on the Gospels and Feasts of the year.¹⁵ It was essential for the purpose he had in view that this book, written in Latin, should be translated into French and retouched and completed by a series of meditations suitable to times of retreat as well as some additional matter, such as a method of mental prayer according to the spirit of Saint Francis de Sales, selected prayers, and rules and instructions both for those on retreat and for those who had charge of them. Father Alméras, to whom this task was confided, set to work.¹⁶ The book appeared in 1644 and proved so

¹⁴ Notices sur les prêtres, clercs et Frères défunts de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1st series, Vol. III, p. 244.

¹⁵ Enchiridion parum meditationum in omnes dominicas, sanctorum festa, Christi passionem et cætera. A French translation of this work was published at Douai in 1612.

¹⁶ The translator desired to remain anonymous, but the title which he assumed and the initials under which he concealed himself in the different editions of the book enable us to discover

successful that, even in 1660, a ninth edition was called for ; subsequent translators of Busée retained the supplements of Father Alméras.

In order to facilitate the practice of making retreats, Saint Vincent received without payment all who presented themselves for admission. Voluntary alms were so little expected that many would have thought it a breach of good manners to make a contribution. Expenses, however, were all the more difficult to meet as the Ladies of Charity, so generous in all other respects, seemed not to take the slightest interest in this work. Happily, a benefactor appeared in 1658 in the person of Louis Chandenier. Abbé de Tournus and Prior of Saint-Pourcin, who offered his priory to Saint-Lazare to enable it to meet the expenses incurred by retreats both for ordinands and others. The revenue was relatively large, but the Bishop of Clermont, whose approbation was essential, imposed a condition that missions should be preached every five years in Saint-

his identity. Instead of his name, we have, at times, the words 'an ecclesiastic of Paris' (1655, 1660, 1667 and 1668 editions); the phrase used by the theologians who gave their approval to the 1644 edition and reproduced in the 1651 and 1659 editions. In the only Latin edition of the book (1654), it is said that Busée has been translated and augmented 'studio P.A.C.M.' What is the meaning of these initials? Some think they signify in the first instance : 'Portail, Anthony, of the Mission', and in the second, 'Portail Antonii, Congregationis Missionis'. The reading 'of the Mission' and 'Congregationis Missionis' presents no difficulty, but the same remark does not apply to the first group of initials, for here we have L.P.A. and not P.A. From the fact that the letter L is not to be found in the Latin formula, we may conclude that it is not the initial of a proper name, but of the definite article. Hence the following name is common and not proper and so we arrive at this interpretation : 'Father (or Priest) A., of the Mission.' (Père, ou prêtre), and 'Patris (seu presbyteri) A., Congregationis Missionis.' It now only remains to determine who A. was. There is only one name beginning with A, amongst Saint Vincent's first companions, to whom the translation of Busée can be attributed, and that is Fr Alméras; the others were too young or did not reside in Paris. As Alméras was, in point of fact, director of retreats at Saint-Lazare in 1644, and drew up the regulations for the exercises, which are to be found in the book, it seems as if there were no room for doubt on the matter.

Pourcin and the neighbouring villages so that the whole sum was not available for the retreats.¹⁷

The public were astonished that the house could support so great an expense, but as a matter of fact, debts accumulated and the Bursar was frequently at his wits' end.¹⁸ Several members of the community thought that Saint Vincent was pushing his confidence in divine Providence a little too far. 'How can I refuse people who wish to be saved?' was his reply. He also remarked: 'If we had enough to live on for thirty years, and if our charity towards retreatants were to reduce us to beggary at the end of fifteen, nevertheless we should not cease to receive them. Expenses are high, it is true, but can money be turned to a better use?' No objection found favour in his eyes, and he had a reply ready for all. If he was told there was not a room unoccupied, he offered his own; if it was pointed out that out of such large numbers on retreat, some would draw no profit from the spiritual exercises, he quite agreed, but would add : 'There is no work of piety that is not profaned, nothing so holy that is not abused, but that is no reason for abandoning them.' Many, on the pretext of making a retreat, went to Saint-Lazare to have free board and lodging for ten days. Such an abuse was unavoidable and Saint Vincent remarked : 'It is always an alms that is pleasing to God. If you take too many precautions to discover and expel all hypocrites, you may also reject some who come here to labour for their perfection.' Nevertheless, on one occasion when he was urged more pressingly by the Assistant or Bursar and told that the house had not enough on which to subsist, he replied : 'Well, bring all who come to me and I will make a selection,' but his generous heart overpowered his resolution to be severe, and never did so many gain admission.¹⁹ Some other remedy had to be discovered.

Saint Vincent did not rest content with meeting the expenses occasioned by the sojourn of retreatants at Saint-Lazare; he cheerfully added all others which Providence seemed to indicate should be defrayed in connection with

17 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VII, p. 299.

18 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. III, p. 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., op. cit., Bk. II, Sect. II, pp. 272-276.

these retreats. If, as sometimes happened, a retreatant fell ill of a sickness that did not allow of his removal, he found in the infirmary of Saint-Lazare all the care and attention demanded by his condition and he was free to remain there as long as was necessary. If he were poor, an alms was given as he was about to leave. Abelly mentions a poor priest who received a cassock, a breviary and ten crowns.²⁰ Saint Vincent's charity did not rest there : he was deeply attached to his retreatants and even the least worthy might rely on him when in need of help. A young Lutheran, recently arrived from Germany, had succeeded by his abjuration and apparent piety, in winning the confidence of the Superioress of a convent in Paris who helped him with some money. The nun, thinking that with M. Vincent's assistance, the young man might become a good missionary, recommended him to the saint. He was admitted to make a retreat; during the exercises, he secretly entered a room, stole a number of articles, put on a cassock and an ecclesiastical cloak and then disappeared through the gate of the church and set off for the Lutheran minister. Drelincourt, in the Faubourg-Saint-Germain. 'I have left the Mission,' he said, ' enlightened by grace and I now come to beg you to receive me into the reformed religion.'

The minister's joy may be imagined ; he promenaded his proselyte through the streets of Paris and introduced him to the best known Huguenots in the city. Nicolas des Isles, one of the foremost controversialists of the day, chanced to meet them and was greatly intrigued by the sight, for how could a Protestant, well known to all as such, be walking about with a Catholic ecclesiastic? He followed them into the first house they entered, and, taking advantage of the earliest opportunity in which he found the young man alone, he began to ask him questions. The youth, all the more confident as he thought he was talking to a Huguenot, repeated what he had told Drelincourt : 'I was in Saint-Lazare and have not only left that house but also the Catholic religion to which I prefer the Reformed.' The incident took place in the parish of Saint-Sulpice; des Isles went to de Bretonvilliers, the parish priest, and both

²⁰ Ibid., op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XI, Sect. V, p. 152.

at once referred the matter to the police. The young man was arrested and imprisoned in the Châtelet. Saint Vincent was urgently pressed in many quarters to avenge the honour of Saint-Lazare by asking for exemplary punishment, but refused to do so. He preferred mercy and forgiveness. He interceded with the judges of the young fool who, he said, was only guilty of the thoughtlessness of youth; he even went to the trouble of pleading his cause before the Procurator General and the Crown Prosecutor.²¹

Despite the inevitable annovances that might be expected from too great a facility in admitting persons to make retreats, Saint Vincent was always happy when he saw his house filled with externs engaged in the salvation of their souls, but great too was his grief at the thought that the Company might ever abandon this work. 'Oh ! what a subject for shame,' said he, ' if we render ourselves unworthy of such a grace ! What shame, gentlemen, and what regret shall we not one day experience if, by our own fault, we lose it and become an object of opprobrium in the sight of God and men! What a subject of grief and pain to a member of the Company who now sees so many laymen of all classes coming here from every direction to remain for a while amongst us in order to amend their lives, if he should ever see this great good work neglected ! He may see a time come when no one is admitted; he may ultimately no longer see what he formerly saw; for, gentlemen, we may come to that, not at once perhaps, but in the long run.'

'What will be the cause? If a person should say to a poor, lax Missionary: "Would you be kind enough, Sir, to act as spiritual guide to a person on retreat?" such a request will seem to him a gehenna; and if he does not make an excuse, he will only do it in a half-hearted way. He will be so anxious to seek his own satisfaction, and will feel such annoyance at sacrificing half an hour or so of his usual recreation after dinner, and the same length of time after supper, that an hour will seem insupportable, although devoted to the salvation of a soul and the best spent hour of the day. Others will murmur against this duty on the pretext that it is very onerous and most expensive,

²¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XI, Sect. VII, p. 174.

and so the Priests of the Mission, who once brought the dead to life, shall no longer have aught but the name and outer semblance of what they once were ; they shall only be the corpses of Missionaries and not true Missionaries ; they shall be carcasses of Saint Lazarus and not Lazaruses risen from the dead, and still less men who raise the dead to life. This Mission, which is now, as it were, a pool of Probatica to which so many come to be cleansed will only be a pool sullied by the laxity and idleness of those who live here.'²²

The success of the retreats depended in great measure on those who were specially set aside to look after the retreatants, and hence it was essential that they should be thoroughly grounded in the duties of their office. On the arrival of a person about to make a retreat, he was taken to his room by a Brother, and the person under whose guidance he was to be placed, was informed of the fact. Saint Vincent had detailed instructions drawn up on the duties of this spiritual guide. When we read these instructions we see at one and the same time the practical wisdom of a Superior and the great heart of a saint. ' One should go and interview the person about to make a retreat, and whilst on the way, one should pray to God, offer the individual to Him, pray to his guardian angel, replenish oneself with the spirit of humility and not with that of a doctor of theology or a despot or a schoolmaster, oh, no ! no ! and enter his room modestly gay and gaily modest, recite the Veni Sancte Spiritus with him, and then ask how he is; after he has replied "Quite well, thanks," one should say, "Blessed be God for the desire He has given you to make a retreat," congratulate him and try to cheer him up, because he will be nervous as to what is going to happen to him, when he sees himself all alone in a room. One should try, if one can, to mingle together in a harmonious fashion, these three colours: modesty, gaiety and graciousness. . . . Be on your guard against asking people who they are. Many have been vexed at being asked such a question. They would no doubt say to themselves : " This is a very curious sort of man, asking me who I am !" You should rather say : "Sir, may I ask ²² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 16.

if you have ever made a retreat previously?" They will say, yes or no. If they say "yes," you might add : "Perhaps you may remember the various exercises?" As a rule, they will reply : " Oh, yes, Sir, but only in a general way ; I shall be very pleased if you would repeat them." And then you may enumerate the various devotional exercises. After that, the object of these exercises should be explained, and that object is to become a perfect Christian, perfect also in one's vocation in life : a perfect student, if one is a student : a perfect soldier. if one is a soldier; a perfect lawyer, if one is a lawyer, and a perfect ecclesiastic, like Saint Charles Borromeo, if one is a priest. Finally, let us be unselfish : let us never utter a word that would go to show that we should like to have them in our Congregation ; let us not even desire it, non concubisces. And remember this, Gentlemen, that if God has bestowed any grace on this little Company, it was because of the disinterestedness that has always distinguished it. Now, that will be enough for a first interview.'23

Saint Vincent frequently, and rightly, insisted on disinterestedness, for if outsiders observed that the retreats were a means of increasing the personnel of his own Company at the expense of others, the work would not have lasted long. 'Let us be content,' he remarks in another place,²⁴ ' with those whom God may send us. If we see that they are thinking of going elsewhere, I mean to any devout religious Order or Community, let us not hinder them.' If we act otherwise, then ' would the Carthusian Fathers and those of Saint Genevieve send us, as they do, numbers of their young men, who are thinking of becoming Carthusians or Canons Regular, to make a retreat?... Now, just think of it !... a young man who is thinking of becoming a Carthusian is sent here to confer with Our Lord by means of a retreat and you would set out to persuade him that he should remain here because he is, perhaps, a very intelligent young man ! Now, Gentlemen, what is that but wishing to have that which does not belong to us, wishing that a person might enter a Company in which God does not desire him to be, to which God has not called him and of which he never thought....

²³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XII, p. 440.
²⁴ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 427.

O poor Congregation of the Mission, into what a pitiable state you would have fallen if you ever came to that !' Here, as usual, Saint Vincent supplies an example. ۴T remember,' he goes on to say,²⁵ ' how one of the brightest minds of the age, who was also an Advocate to the Council, consulted me on his vocation ; he was torn between the desire to become a Carthusian or a Missionary: I felt rather agreeably excited, but God gave me the grace of never speaking a word to him about becoming a Missionary. He went to the Carthusians. I said to him : "Observe ! God is calling you to the Carthusians; go, Sir, where God has called you," but that did not prevent me from being pleasantly excited, yet I always said to him : "Go, Sir, where God has called you".' On another occasion, a young man, gifted with the finest qualities, did not conceal his desire to join the Congregation; a word would have been enough to decide him. Father John de la Salle, who was his spiritual guide, went to consult Saint Vincent who replied : 'Do not say a single word; let Providence act.' Providence acted in favour of the Capuchins of which Order the voung man became an ornament by his virtues and talents.²⁶

Whilst Saint Vincent reminded those in charge of retreats of their obligations, he took care not to forget the other members of the community who also had their own duties to perform; he told them to pray for the success of the spiritual exercises, to edify by their example, to thank God for having chosen the house of Saint-Lazare for the sanctification of so many souls, and finally, to render themselves worthy of a continuance of this grace. 'We have here,' he remarked one day to his community, 27 ' a captain in the army who wishes to be come a Carthusian and who was sent to us by these good Fathers, according to their custom, to test his vocation. I invite you to recommend him to Our Lord. . . . We have another man here who is also an army captain; we shall praise God for him, and also recommend him to God. . . . You should also remember in your prayers a man recently converted from the so-called reformed

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 316. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 442. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 18.

religion ...; he is labouring and writing just now in defence of the truth which he has embraced.'

From time to time, those on retreat experienced severe interior struggles, and when the Saint saw that grace was slow in gaining the victory, he was accustomed to call out to the community for help. 'There is no doubt,' he remarked of one such individual,²⁸ ' that he is capable of doing much good if he is fully converted to God, and on the other hand, if he is not converted as he should be, there is reason to fear he may do great harm.' He always ended in the same fashion : 'Pray for him.'

Saint Vincent de Paul, as we may see, neglected no means, either natural or supernatural, of attaining his object; the results of his efforts were therefore fruitful, as he himself fully realised, and as may be seen from the following extract : 'This house, Gentlemen, once served as a place of retreat for lepers ; they were admitted here and not one of them was cured ; at present it serves as a place of retreat for sinners who are sick men, covered with the leprosy of sin, but they, by God's grace, are healed. We may go even farther and say that they are dead men who are restored to life. What a happiness for us that the house of Saint-Lazare is a place of resurrection ! Saint Lazarus, after he had been three days dead in the tomb, came forth from it alive, and Our Lord, who raised him from the dead, here confers the same grace on many who, having remained with us for a few days, as if in the tomb of Lazarus, leave it in possession of a new life.' . . . 'What a happiness for us Missionaries that Saint-Lazare should be the throne of God's justifications, that this house of Saint-Lazare should be a place wherein an abode for the King of Kings is being prepared in the souls of those who come here to make their retreat with the proper dispositions.'29

The effects of Divine graces were attested by many who had made the spiritual exercises at Saint-Lazare. When Saint Vincent was travelling through Brittany in 1649, he met a man overflowing with gratitude, who said : 'Sir, I should have been lost if I had not made that retreat ; I owe everything to you; it was that retreat which brought me

²⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 18. ²⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

peace of mind and induced me to adopt the mode of life that I now follow, by God's grace, with the utmost satisfaction. Ah! Sir, I am so indebted to you that I mention the fact everywhere, in whatever company I find myself; I tell them that, without the retreat I made through your kindness at Saint-Lazare, I should have been lost. O, Sir, how deeply am I not in your debt?' A priest from Languedoc thus describes the impression made on him during a retreat at Saint-Lazare : 'I received so many marks of kindness and so many tokens of regard and goodwill from all those with whom I conversed that I felt quite ashamed. . . . M. Vincent in particular received me with so much love that I was guite overwhelmed. Even now the memory of it is still dear to my heart, but I cannot find words to express it. Whilst I made these retreats I felt as if I were in Paradise. and now that I am no longer there I feel as if Paris is a prison.... I cannot live any longer in the world and I have taken a resolution to leave it and to give myself entirely to God.'30

No doubt many of those who left Saint-Lazare, after making a retreat, felt the same need of abandoning the world. One of these, Bertrand Ducournau, became a laybrother in the Congregation and subsequently acted as Saint Vincent's secretary. As he was walking one day in the environs of Paris with a young friend and fellowcountryman, the talk chanced to turn on the retreats at Saint-Lazare and the graces that God bestowed on them. 'I spent eight days there,' said the friend, 'and I shall never forget the edification given me by the members of the community; they all speak and live like saints.' Ducournau was a devout young man and these words kindled a desire in him to go and profit by the good example of Saint Vincent and his disciples. Moreover, he had to make up his mind about the future, for, although engaged to be married, he was still doubtful about his vocation, and at times he thought that his proper place was in a community. The last day of the retreat arrived and he was still in doubt; the final meditation was on a vocation to the religious life; that, he thought, is what God intends for me; suddenly all his

⁸⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. IV, Sect. IV, p. 284.

doubts vanished and his mind was made up. He did not know where to go but felt attracted to Saint-Lazare; he asked his spiritual guide if he would be admitted and the priest replied that he would speak to Saint Vincent. The latter summoned the young man to his presence, asked him a few questions, and, delighted with his good dispositions, assured him that there would be no difficulty about his admission. Saint Vincent added : 'Go and take leave of your master, set your affairs in order and return here ; it is God's will that you should be our brother.' Bertrand Ducournau's master was an upright man who fell in with the young man's wishes but asked him to remain until a business matter which he had in hand was concluded, as the presence of his servant would be very useful. Saint Vincent was told by Ducournau himself about the proposed delay and he simply replied : 'Let the dead bury the dead.' Two days after his retreat, the postulant returned to Saint-Lazare, where he was admitted as a lay-brother on July 28. 1644. By his piety, intelligence, hard work, his devotion to Saint Vincent, whose secretary he remained for fifteen years, and by his attachment to the Congregation of which he was a member, Bertrand Ducournau was one of the most excellent Brothers the Company ever possessed.³¹

Many of those who made retreats would have followed Brother Ducournau's example if they had not been prevented by family or other ties. There is still extant a letter from a married working-man who wrote from Germany where he had returned after a retreat at Saint-Lazare begging for admission so that he might, as he himself put it, 'be the least of all the servants of the house or even the attendant on the lodge-keeper.' He was not admitted, but his faith no doubt merited other Divine favours.³²

The Venerable M. Olier states that whilst on retreat at Saint-Lazare he was favoured with a vision. A Dominican nun appeared to him in his room whilst he was at prayer; she advanced majestically towards him, holding a crucifix in one hand and a rosary-beads in the other. An angel of

³¹ Notices sur les prêtres, clercs et frères défunts de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1st series, Vol. I, p. 384.

⁸² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, p. 435.

wondrous beauty held up the edge of her choir-mantle and received in a handkerchief the tears that fell from her eyes. This was her guardian angel. M. Olier writes : 'Her countenance was mournful and penitential and she said to me: "I weep for you"; this affected me greatly and filled me with a sweet sadness. All this time I remained in spirit on my knees before her, although I was actually seated. When all was over, I mentioned the matter to my director, who said nothing but merely asked what words she had uttered. I could not relate them to him, as I had not reflected on them, and yet I remember them guite well. I thought at the time that it was the Blessed Virgin, on account of the holy gravity and gentle majesty with which she appeared to me, and also on account of the angel who rendered her the same services as a maid renders to her Moreover, at the time the only emotion I mistress. experienced was one of devotion towards the Most Blessed Virgin. I also thought that by presenting me with the crucifix and the rosary-beads, she wished to show me that the cross and devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin were to be the instruments of my salvation and the guiding rule of my life.'33 This apparition was shortly followed by another. Some time afterwards, M. Olier happened to be present in the parlour of the Dominican nuns at Langeac in Auvergne. As soon as the Prioress entered, he was struck by her resemblance to the nun he had seen at Saint-Lazare. 'Mother,' he said, 'I have seen you before.' 'It is true,' replied Mother Agnes, 'you saw me twice in Paris when I appeared to you during your retreat at Saint-Lazare, because I was commanded by the Blessed Virgin to pray for your conversion, as God has destined you to lay the foundations of the seminaries in the Kingdom of France.'84

All those who made retreats have not, like M. Olier, left us accounts of the graces they received at Saint-Lazare, but one such grace was, in the eyes of all, the fact that they

³³ Vie de M. Olier, par Faillon, 4th ed., Paris, 1873, oct., 3 vols., Vol. I, p. 93.

³⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 99. Whilst supplying an account of M. Olier's statement, we cannot guarantee the authenticity of the two apparitions.

were able to approach Saint Vincent and be edified by his example." Louis Machon, a Canon of Toul, has referred to this in the dedication of a manuscript volume of ten meditations, composed during his ten days' retreat at Saint-Lazare and presented to the founder of the Mission. 'Sir,' he wrote. 35 'here are some of the spoils which I carried off from your house to enrich myself, without rendering anyone else the poorer. I would be culpably ungrateful, after receiving so many consolations, if I had departed entirely satisfied and had not acknowledged my many obligations to you. Your virtue is well known, none can realise it until they have seen and admired you in person. Your zeal at the altar, your charity towards all, your modesty in all circumstances, your equanimity at all times and the humility of all your actions, have had greater powers of persuasion on me than all the books I ever read and all the preachers I have ever heard. If angels became men they would surely live like you, and if there are mortal saints, they have certainly acted as you do. I do not flatter you, Sir, I say what I have seen ; and if my eyes had not witnessed what I relate, I should be the first to throw doubt on it. God has preserved you, not to reform His Church, but let His ministers behold the grandeur of that sacerdotal character and the purity with which they are bound to carry out their functions. You are a marvel in the way you change men without making any innovations. A ten days' retreat turns into a model of holiness a man who had hitherto done nothing but give scandal. One abandons vice when in your society with greater joy and satisfaction than one embraces it in places where its charms and attractions are at their strongest, and I think it is easier for you to make a man virtuous than for all the debauchees in this world to keep their hold on a boon companion who would consent to listen to you. Virtue is so beautiful in your person that she seems to have chosen you to reveal herself to men's eyes, and when one looks at you one can only love that which renders you so venerable and so worthy of commendation. I would much prefer to be deprived of the little worldly wealth that remains to me than to lose the precious fruits I have gathered in your place of solitude.' Louis Machon

³⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XIII, p. 133.

merely spoke the truth. If the retreats at Saint-Lazare were successful, this was due in great part to Saint Vincent's presence, to his example and his capacity for organisation. In other places, though in different degrees, these retreats produced excellent results. They were given in other houses of the Mission, both in Italy and France, and the Congregation, when admitting priests to make them, was simply carrying out one of the prescriptions of the Papal Bull by which it was established.³⁶

Other communities, following the good example, added this work to their own. In Brittany, Eudo de Kerlivio, Vicar General of Vannes, two Jesuit Fathers, Huby and Rigoleuc, and a devout woman, Mademoiselle de Francheville, devoted their lives to the work of retreats with such zeal as to bring down the blessings of God.³⁷ Saint Vincent advised all priests to make an annual retreat.³⁸

Private retreats led to the practice of making retreats in common, to retreats for ordinands and ecclesiastics, to retreats at the opening of the scholastic year in educational establishments, and to annual retreats in communities. In this way, and in most places, the faithful, influenced by such a powerful means of sanctification, were helped to lead a better life, sinners returned to the path of duty, and heretics opened their eyes to the light of faith.

To those who could not leave their families and occupations to profit by the spiritual exercises, Saint Vincent offered an equivalent which, in some respects at least, was even better, and that was the Missions.

³⁶ Ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 261.

³⁷ Vie des fondateurs des maisons de retraite, M. de Kerlivio, le Père Vincent, Jésuite, et Mademoiselle de Francheville, par le R. P. Pierre Champion, Nantes, 1692, in-12; Vie du P. Jean Rigoleuc, par le même, Lyon, 1739, 4th ed.

⁸⁸ Règlement du séminaire des Bons Enfants, article 39.

CHAPTER XLV

MISSIONS

HEN the idea of preaching missions first occurred to Saint Vincent, the cities were abundantly supplied with priests. In addition to the pastoral clergy, there were members of all the religious Orders : Augustinians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Jesuits and many others. The inhabitants of country districts were far from being so favourably situated. The deplorable negligence of the clergy entailed two evils that were daily increasing : ignorance of the truths of religion and the abandonment of Christian virtue. Saint Vincent, in his apostolic journeys, frequently had sad proofs of this state of affairs, and all that he heard in confidence from bishops and other dignitaries on this matter caused him the deepest grief.¹

To remedy this state of things, at the very beginning of his Institute, he determined that his disciples should devote themselves exclusively to missions in country places. He did not wish them to teach in colleges or universities, to preach on great occasions, to direct nuns (with the exception of the Daughters of Charity) or even to carry on any work in cities that possessed a bishop's residence or was the seat of a He jealously reserved them for the Court of Assizes. peasantry. The Priest of the Mission was and should remain the priest for the peasant : it was a vocation, the greatness and sublimity of which he frequently pointed out by showing that it was the same as that of the Son of God. 'Our Lord.' he used to say,² ' asks us to preach the Gospel to the poor. We have great reason to be humble, seeing that the Eternal Father has chosen us to carry out the plan of His Son, who came to preach the Gospel to the poor and who mentioned

¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. I, pp. 2-3.

² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XII, p. 79.

that fact as a proof that He was the Son of God and the long expected Messias. . . . There is no Company in the Church of God whose inheritance is the poor, and which devotes itself so wholly to the poor as never to preach in large cities. This is what Missionaries profess to do ; it is their special mark to be, like Jesus Christ, devoted to the poor.'

If men were to love this employment, which is not a brilliant one in the eyes of the world, it was essential for them to have a profound love of humility, and Saint Vincent never wearied of recommending this virtue to his Missionaries. 'I would,' he said to them³ 'that God were pleased to grant to this poor Company the grace of establishing it thoroughly in humility, of laying its foundations and building it up on that virtue so that it may remain fixed there, as it were, at its post and within its framework; for observe, Sirs, if we have not humility we have nothing.' A humble Missionary will preach simply, because he will be labouring for the salvation of his hearers and not for his own reputation ; he will speak to convert and not to be esteemed, and if men are to be converted they must understand what is said. No matter what his audience, the preacher should speak simply, but especially when addressing country folk more accustomed to handle a plough than a book, and less fitted to grasp the development of abstract ideas than congregations in cities. As simplicity is needed to make a peasant understand, so is charity required to win his heart. Saint Vincent would have no controversial discussions in the pulpit; no invectives or reproaches mingled with the word of God. When dealing with heretics, gentleness and humility were in his eyes far more powerful weapons than argument. He also demanded of his disciples great prudence and discretion when explaining the sixth commandment. He rebuked any of his priests who dwelt in too much detail or did not speak with sufficient delicacy on this subject. The mission preached before the Court in 1638, caused some annoyance on account of the language employed by some of the preachers when speaking on 'uncovered bosoms' and Saint Vincent was distressed by the fact. Some days later, as a mission was about to begin at Richelieu, he

³ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 439.

VOL. III.-C

requested the Superior to warn his confrères against excessive zeal. 'I beseech you, Sir,' he wrote,⁴ ' to recommend more strongly than ever carefulness in explaining the sixth Commandment and in replying to questions connected with it. If we are not on our guard, the Company will suffer some day for this.' This piece of advice was not unnecessary for a Missionary did fail in this respect.

Enlightened zeal should be accompanied by disinterestedness. Saint Vincent insisted that nothing should be asked for either from the faithful or from the parochial clergy; it was one of the five fundamental rules of his Company that missions should be preached gratuitously. When Urban VIII, in his Bull of Establishment, referred to this point he did so in response to Saint Vincent's request. On more than one occasion, wealthy individuals offered to advance the money required to defray the expenses of a mission; he always refused to accept it. William Delville, the Superior of the house at Crecy, on one occasion received such a proposal; he wrote to Saint Vincent who replied: 'You tell me that Madame de Longueville wishes to pay the expenses. O Sir, is the disintegration and ruin of the spirit of the Mission to begin in Fr Delville's time and mine? Oh ! God forbid that you should be the instrument of such a misfortune ! We are just as much obliged to give missions gratis as Capuchins are to live on alms. Good Heavens ! What would be said of a Capuchin who accepted money, and what could not be rightly said of Missionaries who allowed the cost of missions to be defrayed by individuals; and such a proposal to come from Fr Delville and in my time ! Oh ! absit hoc a nobis ! '5

The Missionaries were bound to live on the revenues of their foundations, and hence Saint Vincent would only accept houses so established, and arranged that the number of priests sent to these houses should be porportioned to the resources supplied by the founders.

The parish clergy were not to be put to any expense, even for the support of the Missionaries, who were to regard the former as their Superiors and to do nothing without

⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 257.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 250.

their consent. Saint Vincent insisted on this; 'One of our maxims,' he said,⁶ 'is to labour to serve the public in accordance with the wishes of the parish priests and never to run counter to their ideas; and when we begin or conclude a mission we ask for their blessing in a spirit of submission.'

A few days before the exercises began, a Missionary went to the place where the mission was to be given, bearing letters of authorisation signed by the bishop of the diocese, which he presented to the parish priest (or, in his absence, to the curate), received his blessing and asked for his consent. If the parish priest refused, matters rested there ; if he agreed, the same priest or another arrived in the parish on a Sunday or Holy day and mounted the pulpit both morning and evening ; in the morning, during High Mass, to speak of the grace of a mission and in the evening, after Vespers, to explain how to make a good general confession.

The faithful had not long to wait for the arrival of the Fathers who rented a furnished house, or at times an unfurnished one which they fitted up with furniture transported on a little cart drawn by horses or mules. Thus established in their temporary home, they had every facility for carrying out their rules, especially if, as often happened, there was a lay-brother with them to look after their material From four o'clock in the morning, the hour for wants. rising, until nine or even ten o'clock at night, the hour for retiring, every moment was taken up either by community exercises or those of the Mission. They met together for mental prayer, for the recitation of the Divine Office and for particular and general examinations of conscience. Their occupations were numerous and varied : preaching, giving catechetical instructions to children and adults, reconciling enemies and restoring peace in families, visiting the sick, establishing or consolidating Confraternities of Charity, holding meetings of the local clergy, interviewing schoolmasters and mistresses to instruct them in the duties of their state.

The sermon was preached very early in the morning before the tillers of the soil had gone off to their work in

⁶ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 199.

the fields, and it dealt rather with practical matters and such as appealed more strongly to the heart than with merely theoretical subjects. Sermons were preached on the four last ends, sin, the rigours of Divine Justice, hardening of heart, final impenitence, false shame, relapse into sin, detraction, envy, enmities, rash judgements, intemperance, the good use of poverty and affliction, the good employment of Time, prayer, Confessions, Contrition, Satisfaction, Holy Communion, the Mass, the imitation of Our Lord, devotion to Mary, and final perseverance. The greatest latitude was given to the director of the Mission in regard to the order, number and choice of subjects.

During the catechism lesson and the catechetical instruction, the Missionaries explained the principal mysteries of religion, the Divine commandments, the precepts of the Church, the Sacraments, the Lord's Prayer and the Angelical The catechism lesson, at which only little Salutation. children were present (known as the 'little catechism '), was given at one o'clock in the afternoon; the priest did not go into the pulpit but stood amongst the children and accommodated himself to their level. On the first day he told them how pleased he was to meet them and to teach them, pointed out the advantages of attending the lessons, urged them to attend faithfully and told them what were the means by which they would best profit by the lessons. Before breaking up, the children chanted the commandments in unison and in this way were better able to memorise them. The catechetical instruction (known as the 'great catechism') concluded the day, and was intended for all the faithful. The Missionary, standing in the pulpit, briefly summed up his lesson of the previous evening, questioned the children for about a quarter of an hour, and then went on to deal with his next topic. Saint Vincent attached the utmost importance to the catechetical method of teaching religion : 'All are still agreed,' he wrote one day, 7 ' that the fruit of a mission is produced by the catechism,' and as soon as outsiders were heard to say that the Missionaries had not been properly

⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 429. (In this respect, at least, his contemporary, George Herbert agreed with the Saint. See Izaak Walton's Life of Herbert, Oxford University Press, p. 304).

MISSIONS

trained for this work, he did everything in his power to see that the reproach should not be deserved.

A general Communion took place at the close of the mission at which such children as were regarded as sufficiently instructed and disposed were allowed to approach the Holy Table for the first time. They were prepared by some special instructions; a homily was preached on the eve of the great day and another on the morning itself just before Holy Communion. 'It is one of the best means we have,' wrote Saint Vincent, ' to touch older persons whose hearts are hard and obstinate and who allow themselves to be won by the devotion of the children and by the care that is taken with them.'⁸

In the evening after Vespers a long procession defiled through the village streets with the First Communicants walking two by two before the Blessed Sacrament, bearing tapers in their hands and followed by the clergy and people. Occasionally, in order to lend greater dignity to this ceremony, the children were dressed in surplices, albs and other vestments. Saint Vincent, when dealing with this matter, advised his Missionaries not to do anything that would displease the parish priest or go against the local custom. 'I beg you,' he wrote to the Superior of the house at Richelieu, 'to see that the children in the procession are not dressed out in any way whatsoever, not even in surplices, unless they are accustomed to wear them;' and to another Missionary: 'If the parish priest objects to a solemn procession, let it be carried out as simply as possible, without any display and without any of the children being dressed up as angels, as is done in some places.'⁹ When the procession had returned to the Church, the celebrant, after a brief allocution, entoned the Te Deum which was sung by the faithful. Early on the following morning, the first communicants returned to the church to assist at a Mass of thanksgiving, after which the preacher exhorted them, if he had not done so the previous evening, to perseverance in well-doing and in the practice of their religious duties.

On the following day, as the Missionaries were now not so busily engaged in hearing general confessions, they

⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 119. ⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 120.

devoted their attention to children who had attained the age of reason but not that for making their first Communion, and these were instructed and their confessions heard. Thanks to their efforts, two abuses common enough in country districts were abolished; in some places, the children made their confessions in public, and in others, no attention was paid to their spiritual life until they had reached the age for receiving first Communion.

A mission lasted from fifteen days to two months according to the size or importance of the parish and the dispositions of the inhabitants. Abelly wrote : ' they are carried on as a rule until all the people of the place, old and young, are sufficiently instructed and restored to a state of salvation by means of general confessions.'¹⁰

At the request of Cardinal Richelieu himself, missionary work was interrupted every week by one day's rest.¹¹

From the feast of Saint John the Baptist to All Saints' Day or thereabouts, that is to say, during harvest time and the vintage season, the Missionaries were on vacation, but the word 'vacation,' as far as they were concerned, is a relative term, because, although missions were not given, they were not allowed to remain idle. They revised their theology, prepared sermons, took the place of sick or absent parochial clergy, and made their annual retreat. Saint Vincent availed himself of this period of leisure to see that his disciples were taught how to preach, catechise and engage in controversy. At these classes the Missionaries were not merely listeners; each of them had to prepare and preach a sermon, either in the refectory during supper or elsewhere, and so that nobody might be exempted, Saint Vincent was always the first to begin. His magnificent conference on ' the little method' opened the course of sermons during the vacation season of 1655.

The better to train his disciples in controversy, he used to invite persons famous for their ability in this art. In 1653, he wrote $:^{12}$ 'Every Sunday two or three persons from the city who have received from God the grace of convincing

¹⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. I, par. 3, p. 13.
¹¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 469.
¹² Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 550.

those of the alleged reformed religion and who bring back many of them to the Church, come here to let us see their method, and, in accordance with this method, two of ours, one taking the part of a Catholic and the other that of a Huguenot, carry on an argument on each occasion in the presence of all.'

Saint Vincent neglected no means of preparing his priests for their missionary labours and of inspiring them with a love of it, and hence he asked them to keep him informed as to how the work was being carried out. The knowledge of what others were doing and of the results they obtained would teach those at home what they must do to gather similar fruits. The Saint used to read these accounts with much pleasure, and, if he heard them objected to, he attributed such criticism to human motives. 'It is bound to happen,' he wrote to the Superior of the house in Rome, ¹³ ' that some persons will not care for the accounts that are sometimes read in public as to what is being done for the glory of God in other houses. They are, as a rule, discontented persons who are opposed to what is good and think that as they do very little themselves, it is an exaggeration to say that others do much; and not only do they think so but they also complain on account of the shame it brings on themselves. Are we, for the sake of the weakness of such purblind individuals who cannot look at the light, to cease from enlightening others by the example of those who are more fervent, and deprive the Company of the consolation of knowing what fruits are being gathered elsewhere by God's grace, to whom all the glory is due and to whom this custom of speaking amongst ourselves of His mercies is most pleasing, as it is in conformity with the custom of the Church which desires that the good works and glorious deeds of Her martyrs, confessors and other saints should be related in public for the edification of the faithful? This was customary even amongst the early Christians, though some probably may have dared to criticise such accounts, though the majority blessed God and encouraged one another to imitate the virtues of those who were mentioned. Hence I beg you not to interrupt this good custom but let us know

¹³ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 614.

all the good results which it may please God to bestow on the labours of your family; I only ask you not to mention anything that is not useful and true and I will try to do the same, when I read them out here.' It was an excellent custom, and in the last year of his life, Saint Vincent in a circular letter written to all the houses, recommended his priests to continue it.

In the course of time, other works were taken up, but missions always remained his favourite. When a distinguished ecclesiastic on one occasion asked him to devote himself exclusively to seminaries, he replied : 'It seems to me that it would need an angel from Heaven to persuade us that it is God's will that we should abandon this work,' that is to say, the missions.¹⁴ On another occasion, he remarked :¹⁵ 'It is the chief part of our vocation; all the rest is merely accessory, for we never would have taken up the work of ordinations and ecclesiastical seminaries if we had not come to the conclusion that it was necessary to do so for the sake of the people, and to conserve the fruit of the missions, thereby imitating great conquerors who leave garrisons in places they have captured lest they might lose what they have won with so much trouble.' Saint Vincent always placed more priests in seminaries or places of pilgrimage than were actually needed for these works, so that all of them might be able to go in turn on missions. Speaking of Cahors, he said :16 'This is the only one of our houses that is reduced to the state of being merely a seminary; all the others, thanks be to God, are also giving missions.' This exception worried him, and if the matter had depended on himself alone, he would gladly have put an end to the situation.

As long as his physical strength permitted, Saint Vincent devoted himself unsparingly to winning souls to God by preaching missions. The first he ever gave was at Folleville in 1617, and from then to 1625 he evangelised the towns, villages and hamlets scattered all over the estates of Philip de Gondi and his wife; these amounted in number to about

¹⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol., II, p. 225.
¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 133.
¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 43.

MISSIONS

forty, and everywhere he rendered the same services. Whilst he resided at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, that is to say from 1625 to 1632, the number of missions given by himself or the priests of that house amounted to about one hundred and forty. From Saint-Lazare, during his lifetime, nearly seven hundred missions were given.

Despite his seventy-two years, Saint Vincent was still at his apostolic labours in 1653. The Ladies of Charity were perturbed and the Duchesse d'Aiguillon wrote to voice their fears. 'I cannot sufficiently express my astonishment,' she wrote, ¹⁷ ' that Fr Portail and the other good gentlemen of Saint-Lazare allow M. Vincent to go off and work at his age in the country during the present hot weather, and to remain out so long in the open air under the sun. It seems to me that his life is too precious and too useful to the Church and to his Company for him to be allowed to spend it so lavishly in this manner. They will permit me to beg them to stop him from wasting it thus and forgive me for telling them that they are bound in conscience to go after him and bring him back, and that people are complaining bitterly of them for taking so little care of him. It is said that they do not appreciate the treasure God has given them, and the greatness of the loss they would sustain ! I am too sincere a servant of theirs and of the Company's to refrain from giving them this piece of advice.'

The love of souls had greater sway over the heart of Saint Vincent than Fr Portail's advice or the gentle remonstrances of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, for he was still preaching missions in 1654, and finding more consolation than fatigue in the work. A day arrived, however, when his physical infirmities would no longer permit of his doing so, and he felt the deprivation intensely. Yet he passed on the flame of love that devoured his own heart in eloquent words to his disciples. 'Let us work, let us work,' he said three years before he died, 'let us go and assist the poor country people who are waiting for us.¹⁸ By the grace of God there are some of our houses that are always at work, some more, some less, giving a mission here, giving a mission there, always at work by the mercy of God. I remember that . . .

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 587, note 2. ¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 444.

in former days whenever I came back from a mission it seemed to me that when I reached Paris, the gates of the city should have fallen and crushed me, and seldom did I return from a mission without that thought occurring to my mind. And for this reason: I used to consider in my own mind : "You are going into Paris and there are other villages waiting for you to do what you have just done in such and such a place. If you had not been there, probably such and such persons, dying in the state in which you found them, would have been lost and would have been damned. If you have found that such and such sins were being committed in that parish, have you not reason to think that you would find the same state of affairs and similar faults and sins in the next parish, and yet they are waiting for you to go and do for them what you have just done for their neighbours; they are waiting for a mission, and you are marching off and leaving them there ! And yet if they die in their sins, you will in a manner be the cause of their loss, and you ought to fear lest God may demand an account of them from you."'

What a magnificent example of zeal, which happily had numerous imitators, not only in his own Congregation of the Mission and the priests of the Tuesday Conferences, but also in the pastoral clergy and religious communities.

The exact number of places to which Saint Vincent de Paul and his sons carried the glad tidings will never be known. Between 1625 and 1660, the Mother House alone gave about eight hundred and forty missions, and during these thirty-five years there were twenty-five other houses engaged in this work. The historian cannot but regret that each Superior did not keep a full account of the missions given by himself and his confrères. The Archives of Saint-Lazare, rich in letters written either by bishops or by the missionaries themselves, consoled Abelly for this loss, and indeed there was such an abundance of documents dealing with this subject that he contented himself with examining only part of the records.¹⁹ The extracts which he does supply²⁰ clearly indicate that the Priests of Saint Vincent won

¹⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. I, par. 5, pp. 20-22.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 24-91.

glorious victories in the battles against ignorance, heresy, vice, superstition and religious indifference. There were very few places in which the whole population, with the exception of the sick and feeble, did not take part in all the exercises of the mission, including the evening catechetical instruction, make general confessions and receive Holy Communion. The faithful manifested their contrition by their tears and spent whole days beside the confessional awaiting their turn ; taverns were closed, enemies reconciled, lawsuits abandoned and acts of injustice repaired ; an end was put to public scandals and an eye kept on blasphemers. Some missions led to a revival of interest in the material fabric of the village churches ; tabernacles were renewed, tin chalices replaced by silver ones, churches repaired and sometimes even re-built.

The Missionaries could not but love their ministry when confronted with such good results; they devoted themselves whole-heartedly to their work, thus adding strength to their zeal and fruitfulness to their actions.

Pride of place in the list of houses primarily devoted to missionary work must be given to the Mother-House ; at first from the Collège des Bons Enfants and then from Saint-Lazare, the Fathers moved all over France. They went in the first place to such districts as they were strictly bound to evangelise. The clauses of the contract of foundation that gave birth to their Company imposed an obligation of giving missions every five years on the de Gondi estates. that is to say on the lands of the Count de Joigny, the Baron de Montmirail and the Lord of the Manors of Villepreux and Folleville, all of which titles were held by the General of the Galleys. As the number of Missionaries increased, foundations multiplied; in 1629, a priest, Louis Calon, established an annual mission in the diocese of Rouen, preferably in the Deanery of Aumale; in 1632, Nicholas Vivian, Master of Accounts, asked for two priests and a brother for missions to be preached in perpetuity within the territories of the Parliaments of Toulouse, Bordeaux and Provence ; in 1633, Elie Laisne de la Marguérie, Master of Accounts, arranged that missions lasting for four months should be preached every five years in the diocese of Angoulême;²¹ in 1634, an Auditor of the Chamber of Accounts, named Antoine Lamy, established sexennial missions for Ferreux and Gentilly, to be given by four priests, accompanied by a brother.

In 1655, the wife of President de Herse procured a mission every five years for all those dwelling on her estates ; she also expressed a wish that during the intervening years, in the lifetime of herself and her son, Felix Vialart, the virtuous Bishop of Châlons, two priests should be placed at their disposal during three months to be sent to whatever places they might select. We may also mention three other quinquennial foundations ; the first, in 1639, established by Claude Chomel for Vilvaudé ; the second, in 1640, by Commander de Sillery for Fresnes near Paris, Sillery, Pisieux, Versenay and Fontaine in the diocese of Rheims; the third, in 1643, by Madame de la Bécherelle for Beuvardes (Aisne).²²

As might be expected, most missions were given within the confines of the archdiocese of Paris. At times, the Fathers found themselves placed in a delicate situation; in one parish, the people were at open war with their pastor; all relations had been broken off between them, the sacraments were not administered nor did they go to Mass. From feelings of hatred, they proceeded to violence, and three or four angry parishioners fell upon and beat the priest inside the Church itself. They were brought before the magistrate and sent to prison to meditate on the respect due to holy places and the ministers of the Lord. The verdict did not by any means secure peace. Public excitement had mounted to such a height that even if Parliament itself had intervened it could not have allayed it. In these circumstances, it was resolved to ask Saint Vincent for his advice; he suggested the best remedy-a mission. Father Tholard was chosen as Superior, and the priests spoke so strongly on the forgiveness of injuries that the people's hearts were touched; when the mission was over, the parish priest had not a single enemy. There was a general scene of reconciliation and public embracing and the miracle was due to Saint Vincent. A deputation of ten or twelve of the inhabitants went to thank

> ²¹ Arch. Nat., M. 211, liasse I. ²² Arch. de la Mission, régistre.

him in the name of the whole people.²³ Urgent appeals reached him from other quarters, even from distant places. When Anne de Murviel, Bishop of Montauban, was making a visitation of his diocese, he realised the critical situation of his flock, scattered as they usually were amongst far more numerous and energetic groups of heretics. In 1630, Saint Vincent sent him two priests who remained in the diocese for two years and converted by their sermons twenty-five Huguenots.²⁴

The diocese of Mende was no whit better off than that of Montauban. In many villages there was no church, no priest, and even very few Catholics, rarely more than half a dozen. Scarcely had Sylvester de Cruçy de Marsillac been appointed bishop than he began to reflect on the best means of assisting the souls who had been confided to his pastoral charge, and at once he bethought him of missions. He wrote to Paris and Fathers Anthony Portail and Anthony Lucas were sent to Mende, both set courageously to work, visiting the parishes, and amongst the many conversions they made were some heretics . . . 25 The Bishop was still mindful of their labours and successes when three years later he again wrote to Paris for assistance. It was at this time that Father Francis du Coudray, then in Rome, was thinking of devoting his leisure to a translation of the Syriac Bible into Latin. Saint Vincent thought that the salvation of the poor in the Cevennes was a more urgent need, and wrote to his confrère : 'Pray give ear, Sir, to what my heart says to yours, namely, that it feels itself strongly urged by a desire to labour and die in the Cevennes, and that it will do so if you do not soon set off to those mountains from which the Bishop cries out for help, saying that this province, once the most devout in the Kingdom, is now perishing from the bitterest hunger for the word of God.' Saint Vincent added to this another appeal, that of the poor inhabitants of those parts which he thus expresses : 'Ah! Father du Coudray, you who have been chosen from

23 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 1, p. 24; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 360. ²⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 8, p. 49.

²⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 112.

all eternity by God's Providence to be our second redeemer, have pity on us who are languishing in ignorance of those truths that are necessary for salvation and in sins that we never dared to confess, and who, in case you do not help us, will infallibly be damned.²⁶ As Father du Coudray was unable to respond to this urgent appeal, Father Portail returned accompanied by Brother Philip who, animated by a holy zeal, endeavoured to take a direct part in the salvation of souls, for on one occasion, seeing a shepherd tending his flocks on the mountain, he set off to teach him the catechism.²⁷

This occurred in 1635 and in the following year we find Father Portail in the diocese of Saint-Flour to which he had been summoned by M. Olier,²⁸ and in which both gave missions together; we shall not, however, speak of them here as they have been dealt with in another place. The Bishop of Mende again asked for and was supplied with Missionaries in 1642 and 1643. The fervour of the faithful who were deeply moved by their sermons, was increased, and sixty or seventy heretics embraced the true faith. Groups of priests were formed on the model of the Tuesday Conferences, and the Bishop, in the course of his pastoral visitation, was able to observe the extent of the good effected by these valiant Missionaries.²⁹

The Western provinces of France were also evangelised. Lambert aux Couteaux and Robert Sergis visited the diocese of Saintes in 1633, and at Mortagne-sur-Gironde³⁰ and elsewhere effected 'a large number of conversions both of morals and religion.' Faithful to Saint Vincent's instructions, instead of attacking heresy directly, they contented themselves with revealing the beauties of the Catholic religion and in this way proved admirably successful. They returned in 1642 and continued their labours until July 1643, 'with marvellous zeal,' and 'great consolation,' as the Bishop of Saintes tells us. The prelate often advised them not to work so hard, and even followed them to oblige them to take a little rest; at the end of the mission, the chief inhabitants

²⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 249.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 303. ²⁸ Ibid., p. 339.

²⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 3, p. 31.

³⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 181.

MISSIONS

of the district waited on the Bishop to thank him in the name of the entire population.³¹ The success of these missions confirmed him in the decision he had taken to establish a house of the Congregation in his episcopal city, and this he did in 1644. John de la Salle and John Brunet spent part of the years 1634 and 1635 in the diocese of Bordeaux. Wherever a mission was announced the faithful poured in. sometimes from great distances, and relying on the virtue of the absolution following on a general confession waited their turn for whole days at the price of severe privations. To those who advised them to be more moderate, they replied that the life of the soul was more precious than that of the body, and undoubtedly their contrition was sincere, for tears poured down their cheeks and they publicly accused themselves of their sins. It would have needed a very robust constitution to endure the fatigues of these missions. Father de la Salle fell ill and had to remain for a long time at Bordeaux, whence he returned to Paris as soon as he had recovered.³²

Save with rare exceptions missions ceased to be preached in country districts in 1636. The Spanish armies, which were operating freely in Flanders because the French troops were forced to remain behind the frontiers or in remote provinces, advanced rapidly into Picardy, seized a number of strong places and entered Corbie. In a short time the vanguard was only ten or twelve leagues from Paris and the terrorstricken inhabitants of Picardy poured into the capital whilst the Parisians fled away. The King improvised an army and the new recruits were ordered to assemble at Saint-Lazare for training. 'It is here,' wrote Saint Vincent, 'that the battalions are being trained and armed, and the stables, wood-house, halls and cloisters are filled with arms and the coming and going of soldiers. Even this holy day of the Assumption is not exempt from a tumultuous commotion : the drums have already begun to beat although it is only seven o'clock in the morning, and seventy-two battalions have been mustered here within the last eight days.' He had

⁸¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 2, p. 26.

³² Ibid., par. 8, p. 50; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, pp. 286, 298, 306, 313.

advanced the time for the annual retreat, intending to send the priests off to different places as soon as it was over. He had been asked to send them to the Abbey of Pebrac in Auvergne, to the diocese of Cahors and Arles. The Missionaries were on the eve of departing, when the Chancellor, Peter Seguier, sent orders from the King, then at Senlis, to Saint-Lazare that twenty priests should be sent to the Army to give missions to the troops. At the moment Saint Vincent had only fifteen available ; he conducted them in person to Senlis, paid his respects to Louis XIII and said : 'Sire, our property and persons are at Your Majesty's disposal ; give the command and we will go wherever we are needed.'

Daniel Grenu was appointed Superior: Francis du Coudray remained with the King to receive his instructions and to transmit them to the Missionaries who were apportioned between several regiments. Saint Vincent did his best to provide them with all that was needed; he sent them a tent and furniture and took steps to see that they would receive rations. These measures, however, only regarded the material side of their existence. He told them that in the Army, they should always act as men who were obliged to lead a community life. He recommended them to follow the order of day at Saint-Lazare as closely as possible, 'especially with regard to the hours of rising and retiring, reciting the Divine office, spiritual reading and examinations of conscience'; to celebrate Mass daily. to keep silence at the usual times, not to speak about affairs of State, to hold conferences amongst themselves on the duties arising from their new position, to live in common as far as possible and to live in tents. Each priest had a special charge : one to look after the sacristy, another to hear his confrères' confessions, a third to read at table, a fourth to attend the sick, a fifth to supervise meals and a seventh to take charge of the tent and its furniture, to see that everything was packed, unpacked and placed in its proper place.

But the work that took up most time, and the one in which all or almost all were engaged, was that of ministering to the spiritual needs of the soldiers. By September 20, four thousand men had been to confession, and even then the

mission was not over, for it lasted six weeks. When it was finished, many Missionaries returned to Paris, whilst the remainder accompanied the army as chaplains and were not demobilised until November, after the final victory. Amongst the latter was Lambert aux Couteaux who was appointed chaplain to the cavalry; Robert de Sergis was about to join him when the Chancellor requested him to remain with himself.³³ Such a request could not but disturb a young priest little familiar with the manners and customs of a Court. He wrote to Saint Vincent but did not mention whether he was to accompany Peter Seguier as a private chaplain or as a chaplain to the troops. The Saint replied ; 'If in the first capacity, I have nothing to say to you about confession, Holy Mass, or saying grace before and after meals.... At the end of Mass some ceremonies are observed when persons of rank are present; namely, one should return and make a bow at the end of Mass, after removing the chasuble. I have seen his Lordship of Geneva perform this act of reverence to the General of the Galleys; your position is infinitely below that of this great and holy prelate. I also think that the corporal is taken to them to be kissed, and that Holy Water is given to them after Mass. . . . If you take your meals from time to time with the head of the household, always take the lowest place. The head of the household never yields his place to anyone, and the gentlemen of the household take precedence of chaplains in most places, even in prelates' establishments. . . . If you are going in the second capacity, you should find out if you could give some catechetical instructions in church on some days of the week. Remember what Saint Francis Xavier used to do on board ship when he was going to India, and strive to imitate him, and do what you think before God he would have done if he were in your place.'34 From other letters it would seem as if Father de Sergis went as the Chancellor's private chaplain, and this post of honour proved to be the occasion of a spiritual crisis which, with Saint Vincent's help, he passed through safely. He far preferred to return

⁸⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, pp. 353-354.

VOL. III.-D

³³ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XXXIII, pp. 152 and foll.

to missionary work in the south of France, and was sent there shortly afterwards.35

His confrères did not remain idle. Bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries eagerly sought for their services; Commander de Sillery was one of those who appreciated the value of missions, and hence, when the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta commissioned him to make a visitation of the parishes dependent on the Grand Priory, the Commander thought it would be a good idea to take some Missionaries with him who would evangelise all those places over which the jurisdiction of his Order extended. Fathers John Bécu, Gilbert Cuissot, and some others were placed at his disposal. The result surpassed the Commander's hopes, as he wrote to Lascaris, the Grand Master, who thought it his duty to thank Saint Vincent. Commander de Sillery's visitation was begun in 1637, and was still proceeding in the spring of 1639.³⁶

At the end of 1637, Bernard Codoing was evangelising Dauphiné, ³⁷ and Robert de Sergis the estates of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon;³⁸ the latter continued for three years to give missions in the dioceses of Agen. Toulouse, Viviers, Bordeaux, Angoulême and perhaps some others. He would seem to have remained longer in the diocese of Toulouse than elsewhere, and his confrère, Nicholas Durot, joined him there and rendered much assistance. Both laboured with the greatest zeal, and when the time for departure came, the Archbishop, Charles de Montchal, could not conceal his regret.³⁹ 'I cannot.' he wrote to Saint Vincent, 'give you any idea of the trouble they have taken or of the fruits they have gathered. . . . One of them has made himself such a master of the language of this country as to excite admiration amongst those who speak it, and has shown himself indefatigable in his exertions. As soon as they are somewhat rested and refreshed, I will beg you to send them back to us, for I am preparing to have the exercises for ordinands carried out and I need their assistance to do so.'

- ⁸⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, pp. 355-356.
- ³⁶ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XXXII, pp. 148 and foll.
 ³⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 412.

- ³⁸ Ibid., pp. 414, 449, 451.
 ³⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 8, p. 52.

Nicholas Durot also followed Robert de Sergis into the diocese of Angoulême; amongst the missions they gave was, in all probability, that preached at Saint-Amant in 1640, which was followed by numerous conversions. To be accurate, the population of Saint-Amant represented only a tiny fraction of the congregation which was composed of the inhabitants of thirty or forty parishes, members of the Order of Missions, Capuchins and leading citizens of Angoulême. Six Huguenots from Montignac abjured their errors. A breath of pure air passed through these great assemblies and for a long time purified the moral atmosphere of the whole region. The Duke de la Rochefoucauld, a witness of all the good that had been accomplished, resolved to procure the benefit of a mission for Verteuil and Marsillac in the following Lent.⁴⁰ In 1643, the Missionaries returned and evangelised Blanzac amongst other places. Nobody had a higher appreciation of the value of their services than the Bishop, James du Perron, and he thought of establishing a house of the Congregation in his diocese. He took the preliminary steps; Saint Vincent was prepared to let him have several priests, but for reasons unknown, the project fell through.⁴¹ In 1655 a fresh attempt was made but, as du Perron's successor was not favourable, without result.42

Sens was another diocese in which missions were frequently given. Everywhere the people, under the influence of their exhortations, resumed the practice of their religious duties; the fact is attested in 1642, as far as Saint-Cyr is concerned, by the Lord of the Manor and his wife, and in 1644, for Tonnerre by Le Boucher, Vicar General of the Abbey of Moutiers-Saint-Jean.⁴³ Saint Vincent seems to have had a marked predilection for Joigny, no doubt because it was the chief town in Philip Emmanuel de Gondi's estates, and nowhere else did he do so much to win souls to God. He did not send merely one or two Missionaries there every five years, but eight, nine and even ten, selecting them from amongst his best disciples, both those of his own Congregation and of the Tuesday Conferences. He even laid aside

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 52. ⁴¹ Ibid., p. ⁴² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 429. 41 Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁸ Abelly, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

his customary occupations to go and take part in the missions himself.⁴⁴ The people of Joigny, on their side, showed themselves worthy of the interest he took in them : in 1650 one of his Missionaries wrote to him: 45 'I am amazed at the assiduity of the people in attending the sermons and catechetical instructions, and at their diligence in rising in the morning, for occasionally, when the bell for the sermon was rung at two o'clock in the morning, the Church was already full.' At a distance of three centuries one cannot but be surprised at such a manifestation of lively faith and such a hunger for the word of God. And yet the priest who wrote the preceding lines was even more surprised by the fervour of the villagers living around Joigny. 'These dear people,' he goes on to say, 'usually come to confession in tears; they regard themselves as the greatest sinners in the world, and ask to have the severest penances imposed on them.' One evening a person who had already been to confession approached the priest and complained that he had not been treated with sufficient severity. 'Father,' he said, ' the penance you gave me was not proportionate to the grievousness of my sins; I beseech you to command me to fast three times a week for a year.' Another begged that he should be commanded to walk barefoot during frosty weather as a penance, and a third said to the priest on the same day : 'Father, I heard the preacher say that the best way to cure oneself of the habit of swearing was to ask pardon on one's knees from those to whom one has given scandal. I have just done so after letting the words ma foi escape me.'46 The Missionary continued his apostolic journey and was always edified by the faith and devotion of the people. Two months later, he wrote to say that none had failed to make a general confession; 'it is marvellous,' he added, ' to see how deeply the people have been moved. Sometimes I spoke to them only during the first days on those subjects that stir up souls to realise the necessity of doing penance on account of their great tenderness of heart; for I was afraid lest they might be terrified by their imaginations."

44 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, pp. 38, 175-177, 536, 538; Vol. IV, p. 26; Vol. V, pp. 431, 470. 46 Ibid., p. 47.

War and the movements of troops for a long time prevented the preaching of the missions in parts of Champagne. When the way was open to do so, Saint Vincent remembered that he was obliged by one of Commander de Sillery's foundations to render spiritual assistance to certain places in that unhappy province which death and plague had so recently ravaged and reduced to misery. As Sillery itself contained only eighty inhabitants, Emerand Bajoue was sent there in 1657; he was touched by the tears that ran down the people's cheeks during Holy Communion and at the tone in which they promised aloud to renounce sin, to suffer patiently and to serve God lovingly. He next went to Ludes and succeeded in reviving morality and religion: 'The frequenting of taverns is forbidden and also meetings at night; the people no longer swear and now pronounce the Holy name of God with the deepest respect; they enter houses, kneel down and ask forgiveness of those whom they have offended.' The good people of Ludes also undertook to complete the building of the Church which had long remained unfinished. At Fontaine, the mission put an end to lawsuits, public scandals and sacrileges; it also benefited the neighbouring villages, and persons came to take part in the exercises from places fourteen leagues away. The Fathers had not such a good reception at Ay, as a campaign of calumny had preceded their arrival and there was even talk of closing the gates in their faces. However, as soon as they were known, prejudices disappeared, and as Father Bajoue tells us, the mission proved a great success : 'Never did a mission begin so well. The people make their confessions with the greatest care and with all the signs of sincere contrition; they make restitution; they ask one another's forgiveness on bended knees; they pray to God both morning and evening, and show that they are firmly resolved to make a complete change of life and to lead a truly Christian one. The (Huguenot) minister who resided here has departed, and the few heretics in this place, who are poor and extremely ignorant vine-dressers, do not miss a single sermon.'47

Perhaps it was the same Fathers who evangelised the ⁴⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 5, pp. 39-40. diocese of Châlons-sur-Marne in 1658. When the Bishop, Felix Vialart, summoned them to his assistance he had two objects in mind : one, to stir up the faith and devotion of his people, and the other, to teach the clergy the best manner of instructing their parishioners. He succeeded in both these aims. The missions at Vassy and Holmoru,⁴⁸ not to speak of those given elsewhere, were wonderful manifestations of religious devotion.⁴⁹

Thanks to a foundation made by Father Calon, the diocese of Rouen was entitled to an annual mission. The Archbishop always witnessed their arrival with unfeigned delight, and as he said in his letters to Saint Vincent, he was equally saddened by their departure; he praised their virtues, extolled their courage in combating vice and expressed hopes that they would return to renew the battle.⁵⁰

The houses of the Congregation established in the provinces were worthy rivals of the Mother House, for each in its own sphere actively contributed to reaping the abundant harvest of souls which led to the moral and religious improvement of the people, especially in dioceses that had been ravaged by heresy. Such a diocese was Geneva, evangelised by the Fathers at Annecy with a zeal whose efficacy the Bishop, Juste Guérin, was the first to recognise. In June, 1640, he wrote to Saint-Lazare :⁵¹ 'The fruits gathered by the Missionaries in our diocese are beyond belief save by those who have seen them. I myself have been an evewitness in the course of my pastoral visitation begun after They are loved, cherished and praised with Easter. unanimity by the entire population. Undoubtedly, Sir, their doctrine is holy as also is their conversation, for they profoundly edify everyone by their spotless lives. When they have finished a mission in one village, they set off for another, accompanied by the people who are in tears and who cry out amidst their sobs : "O bon Dieu ! What shall we do? Our dear Fathers are leaving us." They follow them for several days to other villages. Persons from other

- ⁴⁸ Now called Heiltz-le-Maurupt.
- 49 Abelly, op. cit., par. 6, p. 48.
- 50 Ibid., par. 5, p. 41.
- ⁵¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 4, p. 34.

MISSIONS

dioceses may be seen coming to confession to them, and in this way some wonderful conversions have been effected.' There are other letters of the prelate still extant, written at a later period, equally eulogistic, in which he thanks God for the excellent labourers God has sent to his diocese, testifies to the happy influence of their words on the souls of sinners, and again and again expresses his regret that they are so few when one bears in mind that they are confronted with a task beyond their strength.⁵²

The Missionaries at Toul walked in the footsteps of their brethren at Anneçy. At the end of a mission one of them wrote : 'We have heard five hundred general confessions and have not had a single day's rest for a month.' They were encouraged to endure such fatigue by the sight of the faithful regularly attending the exercises of the mission, taking no thought of distance, of the snow which was several feet deep, or of the dangerous state of the roads infested with marauding soldiers. At Charmes, the entire population without a single exception, attended the mission and showed the depth and sincerity of their repentance by the tears they shed at the remembrance of their sins.

In 1657, the Fathers residing in Troyes preached a great mission at Nogent, which lasted for a month and a half; they were assisted by the Vicars General and for some days even by the Bishop himself. The parish priest was surprised at the sight of more people in his church on week days than were usually to be seen there on Easter Sunday. The 'little method ' again proved victorious and the Vicars General, filled with admiration at its efficacy, said to all who would listen to them that any other method of preaching was simply a waste of time.⁵³

There were two houses of the Congregation in Brittany, one at Saint-Méen and the other at Tréguier, and from these two centres the Fathers moved out in every directon preaching repentance and penance. They heard five thousand general confessions at Pleurtuit; coming out from the Church one day they found a Breton nobleman on his knees in the cemetery asking pardon from all those whom he had offended. The faithful travelled long distances

⁵² Ibid., par. 5, p. 41. ⁵³ Ibid., par. 7, p. 47.

(some of them eight leagues) to obtain forgiveness from their enemies before going to confession. At Mauron, more than twelve hundred persons attended the catechetical instructions. Domestic servants left their situations because their masters would not give them permission to attend the mission ; some gladly consented to have their wages reduced, whilst others were fortunate enough to find persons willing to take their place in their absence. During the three days of the Carnival, the administration of Holy Communion lasted so long that, as the Superior of the mission wrote to Saint Vincent, the priest was still engaged in his sacred task at seven o'clock in the evening. All the taverns, and they were numerous, closed their doors, and the habit of repairing to them after the sale of a bullock or any other object, disappeared and was replaced by a new one of giving an alms to the Confraternity of Charity.

Eighteen parishes were represented at the mission given in Plessala. Many of the faithful told their confessor that they had been waiting their turn for ten days, and the priest himself wrote : 'I think the same thing is true of more than five hundred.' Sermons on the forgiveness of injuries proved most efficacious; lawsuits were abandoned and disputes settled. In the case of guarrels between noblemen, the example given by Baron du Rechau proved to be of the utmost value. The three days of the Carnival were sanctified by devotional exercises; on Sunday, a solemn procession was held and for two hours the people walked silently and devoutly in the rain, whilst the Bishop of Brieuc carried the Blessed Sacrament; on Tuesday, he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation, and as the church was filled with communicants, administered it in the cemetery, notwithstanding the inclement weather. The Missionaries remained for several weeks at Morlaix and Guingamp. During the second mission, they had two distinguished helpers; the Bishop of Tréguier who preached twice a week, and his Canon Theologian who preached a sermon every morning in Low Breton. At the close of another mission the Bishop wrote to Saint Vincent: 'All the inhabitants of this place of every age, sex and condition have been converted, and I have good reason to thank

God for having given me, through you, such excellent labourers.'54

They had considerable success also at Saché, and it would be impossible to enumerate all the reconciliations, acts of restitution and conversions that were effected. The good example given by the parish priest, his curate and five other ecclesiastics, all of whom attended the exercises, helped greatly to bring about this good result. A wealthy burgher, hitherto deeply attached to his money-bags, asked the preacher to announce that he proposed to distribute bread three times a week at his own door. Though the parish contained only six hundred communicants, yet on the day appointed for a general Communion, twelve hundred persons approached the Holy Table. The inhabitants of Villaine responded with equal alacrity to the Missionaries' efforts, and when the parish priest, who was eighty-eight years of age, saw two thousand taking part in the procession he could not believe his eyes and wept for joy. Never in his life, said he, had he seen such a concourse of people or such great fervour. 55

During the first three years of the foundation at Luçon, the Missionaries were unfavourably impressed by the disposition of its inhabitants, but gradually their minds and hearts were opened and they welcomed the word of God. 'The people of Poitou,' Saint Vincent was informed at the close of a mission, 'whose souls seemed as hard as rocks, have so strongly and ardently been inflamed with the sacred fire of devotion that it seems as if it could not be extinguished for many years.' The mission at Essarts led to the conversion of seven heretics and produced a notable change in the lives and conduct of the local gentry and officers of justice. The chief difficulty to be surmounted at Saint Gilles-sur-Vie was to put an end to private quarrels and enmities which were dispersed by the mission, like leaves before the Autumn winds. Those who retained the property of others made restitution, and thanks to the establishment of a Confraternity of Charity, the sick and poor were provided for in the future. Although Lucon was

⁵⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 6, pp. 42 and foll. ⁵⁵ Ibid., par. 8, p. 53. an episcopal see, yet it too had a mission which proved 'most fruitful,' as the Bishop himself wrote in a letter to Saint Vincent to express his joy at the results and his admiration for the Missionaries, especially for their Superior, Father Chiroye: 'who is constantly at work and with admirable results; he possesses talents most fitted for his employment and his zeal excites the admiration of all. He deserves praise in every respect, except perhaps that he works too hard, if one can work too hard at winning souls to God.'⁵⁶

The diocese of Montauban suffered especially from the prevalence of sorcery, which was vigorously combatted by the Missionaries, who won a complete victory, for in all the villages they evangelised not a single witch or wizard remained.⁵⁷

The letters of Jacques Raoul de la Guibourgère, Bishop of Saintes, enable us to see that the Fathers in that city were just as zealous as those of Lucon and Montauban: they displayed the same energy and contempt for fatigue, and had the same success. At Gémozac, seven or eight heretics abjured their errors and many more would have done likewise were it not that human respect or the fear of being overtaxed by the Huguenot nobles paralysed their goodwill. The Missionaries remained for a month at Déniat but were forced to abandon their labours from fatigue, though happy at having effected more than four hundred reconciliations and put an end to more than a hundred lawsuits. When on the eve of their departure the parish priest announced the sad news to his people, his words were drowned by their sobs and a ruse had to be employed in order to prevent the people from opposing the departure of the Missionaries. They were also unable to finish the mission at Usseau for the same This parish caused them a good deal of trouble; reason. every year during the Whitsuntide holidays public dances were held, in the course of which, unfortunately, acts of rape and even of murder were sometimes committed. On Whit Sunday morning the preacher denounced this deplorable custom, but all the same a dance was held that evening.

⁵⁶ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. II, par. 8, p. 50. ⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

The dancers however were dismayed by the arrival of the Superior of the Mission accompanied by some other ecclesiastics; they immediately moved away from the square, leaving their violins behind them, and then took to their heels. On the following day, the preacher appeared in the pulpit carrying a violin; he naturally enough, referred to the dance, and when the opportune moment arrived, took up the fiddle and broke it, the better to impress the congregation. Amongst those present were the dancers of the previous evening and the preacher's action achieved their conversion : when the sermon was over, they confessed their fault and promised to amend. The lesson was not without value; dancing ceased in the parish, and ten years later it was always excluded from public rejoicings. The special conferences for ecclesiastics were also well attended and bore good fruit. Seventeen parish priests promised to lead a really exemplary life and to appear always in public wearing a cassock. 58

We have made a general tour of France to see the influence the Missionaries exercised over the people. They contributed greatly to a revival of faith at a time when extensive provinces had been contaminated by heresy and a careless clergy had allowed the cockle to grow freely in the field confided to their care.

Other countries, better shielded against heresy than France, suffered as much or even more from the culpable negligence, and only too often from the sad example of ministers of the sanctuary. Italy was no exception; there were three houses of the Congregation of the Mission in Italy, at Rome, Turin and Genoa respectively and their inmates were remarkable both for their zeal and ability. The simple burning eloquence of Fathers Blatiron and Martin swayed large congregations; nothing could withstand their efforts and their missions frequently proved to be magnificent triumphs. We shall begin with the Eternal City.

Rome, in the seventeenth century, was situated in the midst of a desert; from four to five leagues all around the country was uninhabited owing to its unhealthy condition. The land was left uncultivated and used simply as sheep-

⁵⁸ Ibid., par. 2, pp. 27-30.

runs. From October and November, flocks of sheep and goats converged there from all Italy; during the day the sheep wandered about freely and when night fell they were placed in pens. The shepherds, their task over for the day, gathered in tents in groups of ten or twelve, to take their meal and spend the night lying on sheep-skins. These poor folk lived without any religion; no priest ever came near them, and the rare chapels scattered over these vast solitudes did not attract them. Vincent de Paul, with the thought before his mind of the shepherds of Bethlehem, summoned before all others to the crib of the Infant Jesus, was moved to pity and recommended those of the Roman Campagna to the zeal of his disciples.

The latter gladly undertook a ministry so conformable to the end of their institute. They arrived in the evening when the shepherds and herdsmen, their day's work over, had returned to their tents; they then taught a little catechism, said a few words of exhortation, recited evening prayers in common with their flock, had a meal in the tent and slept on the floor. They returned the following evening and as often as it was necessary. When their work was finished in one hut they went on to another until all had been visited. Very few shepherds omitted to make a general confession, and at last the great day arrived for a general Holy Communion. A Sunday or Holy day was chosen ; the shepherds assembled for Mass at the nearest chapel and were prepared for a worthy reception of the Blessed Eucharist by a short devout sermon.

The Missionaries' labours were not confined to the Roman Campagna. Everywhere the same evils had to be remedied : ignorance of the most elementary truths of our religion, immorality in every shape and form, habitual blasphemy, bitter quarrels and a thirst for revenge that often ended in murder. Abelly does not reveal the name of a town of three thousand souls evangelised by the Missionaries in 1642 where the hostility of the local clergy at first rendered all their efforts unavailing ; after a fortnight, hearts began to soften and grace to do its work ; its effects were seen on the day of general Communion when the church resounded with the sobs and groans of the people.

In 1654, they evangelised the diocese of Sarsina in Romagna, ending up in a large town perched high among the Appenines. Here too the opposition proceeded from the clergy who at first treated them as foreigners and even as spies, but the Missionaries gradually won the confidence of the priests by their simplicity, courtesy and disinterestedness. The young people, owing to their parents' bad example, led very loose lives; boys and girls were accustomed to spend much of the night ' in vain and silly flirtations '; they went to church at the prescribed times, not to worship God, but simply to have opportunities for further meetings. The Missionaries recalled to mind a chapter in the Introduction to a Devout Life (Bk. II, Ch. XVIII) by Saint Francis de Sales, which seemed to have been specially written for these young libertines. They read it from the pulpit and the guilty had no difficulty in recognising their portraits, but nothing touched them so deeply as the refusal of absolution. Almost all resolved to amend their conduct. There were some hardened sinners even amongst the priests. One of them, for long unfaithful to the vow he had taken as a subdeacon, publicly boasted he had not attended a single exercise of the mission. A few days later he was killed by one of his confrères on the spot where he had uttered the boast.

In 1655 Cardinal Brancaccio summoned the Missionaries to Vetralle, in the diocese of Viterbo. Every morning, at the end of the first Mass, the Christian's Exercise was explained, followed by a simple instruction on the principal mysteries of religion and the manner of making a good confession. In the evening, between the sermon and night prayers, a general examination of conscience was made aloud. One remark made by the preacher in his sermon on Holy Communion created a deep impression : 'I tell you, in the name of God, not to dare to approach the Holy Table until you have been reconciled with your enemies.' This produced the desired result and the faithful asked pardon of each other with tears in their eyes, in the streets, houses and the church. Two men had long cherished a reciprocal hatred; they were placed side by side in the procession but did not at first notice the fact; when they did so they embraced and

promised for ever to forget their dissension. Enmities were often due to financial quarrels; one debtor who could not be induced by legal decisions or by a sentence of excommunication to pay four hundred crowns, made restitution during the mission; another, though well off, was avaricious and held tightly to a hundred crowns which he owed a poor neighbour who vainly demanded them of him; stricken with remorse, he gave a house and portion of a vineyard that was worth four times his debt. A young man, the victim of an attempted assassination three years previously, had lost the use of an arm despite the care lavished on him by his family. The father could not think of the culprit without feelings of revenge, but the mission opened his eyes ; not only did he forgive, he also declared that he would not ask any compensation from the man who had done him so much wrong. More than seventeen hundred general confessions were heard.

The mission given at Breda in 1656 also produced excellent results. The Missionary surpassed himself on the morning of the general Communion and had to pause twice during his sermon on account of the tears and sobs of the people. When the sermon was over, one of the local clergy went up to the high altar, knelt down and asked pardon for his scandalous life amidst cries of 'Misericordia' from the congregation. The whole morning was spent in reconciliations and mutual embraces; the rich did not feel ashamed to humble themselves before the poor. After Vespers a procession was formed and a discussion arose as to which of the confraternities of penitents established in the parish should take first place; as a rule, this was a very touchy point on which it was difficult to secure agreement, but on this occasion it was soon reached, for when one individual proposed that the 'white penitents' should go first, peace was immediately restored. The people subscribed for a silver crucifix for the Church, and the total sum collected exceeded by a hundred crowns the amount that was required.

As far as the number of murders was concerned few dioceses were as bad as that of Palestrina. The Missionaries were sent there in 1657, and their first mission was given in a large town of twelve hundred communicants in which seventy murders had been committed within three years. Almost the whole parish took part in the exercises, and very few omitted to make a general confession. Two widows drew up an official statement in the presence of the parish priest and a notary that they forgave their husbands' murderers. One of them confessed she had never felt such consolation in her life, but her relations said : 'You did wrong; a woman who loves her husband never forgives.' to which she replied : 'I prefer to save my soul, and if it had to be done over again, I would do it.' A young man who had lost the use of an arm as a result of a brawl wished to kill the man who had wounded him, but the Fathers succeeded in changing his hatred to love. At the end of a sermon, chancing to meet his enemy in the public square, he knelt down in front of him, then rose and heartily embraced him. Those who had much to forgive found less difficulty in doing so when they learned of this act of virtue. Two of the principal families in the town had been carrying on a vendetta for three years; the casualties on one side amounted to one killed and one seriously wounded; on the other, to ten killed. The bandits hid by day to avoid capture and returned home at night. The director of the mission arranged a meeting place for both parties in a quiet spot; the interview lasted scarcely ten minutes; in response to the priest's exhortations, the chief brigand said in a voice trembling with emotion: 'I promise God and Your Reverence to make peace with my enemies.' After he had spoken these words he went aside to give free vent to his tears; it was agreed that both parties should meet in the church on the following morning to sign a treaty of friendship before a notary; to this there was, however, some opposition; the whole affair seemed as if about to fall through, but the help of the Queen of Heaven was implored and all obstacles were removed. The whole population was present at the scene of reconciliation which proved to be a touching sight, and many were unable to restrain their tears. Several of those present now felt ashamed that they had not yet pardoned their enemies; an old man and a young one embraced swearing to forget the cause of their quarrel. The former said to the latter : 'I mean henceforward to treat you as my son,' to which the other answered, 'And I will regard you as my father.' When the mission closed, the series of reconciliations was complete, and the success of the Missionaries unqualified.

Four missions led to a renewal of Christian life in parishes that depended on the Abbey of Subiaco. Three women of notoriously evil life, publicly asked pardon in the church. Some, rather than expose themselves to blasphemy when playing games, decided to abandon them altogether, whilst others preferred an arrangement by which whoever blasphemed should lose the game, or pay a fine to be given to the poor. The people agreed to spend their free time on Sundays and Holy days in attending Vespers and listening for an hour to readings from the lives of the Saints, the writings of Louis of Granada or other devotional works; they also subscribed for the purchase of a large Psaltery, an Antiphonary and other liturgical books. In one parish a notary spent six days writing out agreements arrived at in the course of the mission, either to modify usurious contracts, conclude pacts of friendship or revoke unjust alienation of ecclesiastical property. The town had no school, for it was too poor to pay for the support of a teacher; an officer offered part of his salary to supply the necessary funds. The local doctor annually received a bushel of wheat from each family: he renounced this offering for a period of three years, and asked that, with the consent of the inhabitants, it should be used as a fund (it amounted to nearly a hundred sestieres) from which loans could be made to the poor. Two sources of annovance and trouble for poor persons were, first, that the local lords frequently taxed their tenants for damages for which they were not responsible. and second, that property which had been seized by order of the Court was never restored to the owners. The appointment of two protectors of the poor and of a trustee to take charge of movable property put an end to these abuses.

Between 1638 and 1660, the Fathers at Rome gave more than two hundred missions, only some of which have been recorded, but these will enable the reader to form an idea of the admirable results effected. Similar fruits were

MISSIONS

gathered everywhere else and it would be difficult to deal with the matter more fully without falling into repetitions.⁵⁹

We shall, therefore, move northward from the city of the Popes and proceed to Genoa where the Missionaries in that great city proved themselves worthy rivals of their brethren in Rome. One of the first places in which a mission was given was Chiavari where they succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation between three parishes that had long been divided. In July 1646, in another locality, they had to call in the assistance of eighteen priests to hear five thousand confessions; two young clerics prepared the faithful to make their confessions, and in this way they rendered the confessors' work much easier. This was also a place in which disputes frequently terminated in bloodshed; only a short time previously there had been twentythree or twenty-five murders. The families of the victims appeared before a notary so that an official deed, testifying that the guilty parties had been forgiven, might be authenticated, for this was an indispensable condition to secure an amnesty from the reigning prince.

A mission given near Genoa in 1647 attracted almost all the nobility of the city, and the Archbishop, Cardinal Durazo, went there himself to administer Confirmation. A nobleman offered the Cardinal a gift which he refused, in imitation of the Missionaries, one of whose rules was that they should not accept any gifts during a mission. On the last day, when the people saw the Fathers kneel before the parish priest for his blessing, tears flowed from many eyes and the church re-echoed with the cry, 'Misericordia !' It became necessary to tear the Fathers away from the hands of those who wished to retain them before they could leave the locality. In the same year, in another place, seven brigands were converted, and also a Turk who was the servant of a nobleman.

At Avagni and Sastri bandits threw themselves at the feet of their victims' relations to obtain forgiveness. At the end of the mission, the people wished to have the Fathers always with them; the priests were besieged in their residence for two or three days and only managed to escape under cover of darkness.

⁵⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. III, pp. 55 and foll. VOL. III.—E

An appeal for the establishment of a Confraternity of Charity made to the inhabitants of a poor village, in 1650, was followed by a gift of five hundred livres in ready money, and seven hundred livres in capital and bonds. A Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was also established, and the members undertook to teach the *Pater* and *Ave* and the principal mysteries of religion to the ignorant, as well as to seek out and bring children to the catechism lessons. Towards the end of this year (1650) two men who had been publicly keeping concubines begged pardon for the scandal they had given, during a sermon preached in the church. Usurers bound themselves legally to restore all interest taken above the current rate. Ten or twelve parish priests became members of the ecclesiastical conference that met every Sunday.

In 1659, seven hundred persons out of a parish containing two hundred and forty communicants approached the Holy Table. A father whose son had recently been assassinated, ended, after some reluctance, by publicly forgiving the murderer, and did so in a manner that brought tears to the eyes of all who heard him. In the same year, at the end of another mission, a son performed a similar act of clemency towards the assassin of his father.⁶⁰

At the invitation of the Senate of Genoa, the Fathers gave four missions in Corsica : at Campo di Loro, Sant Andrea di Cotone, Corto and Nicolo. No country was in greater need of missions, for nowhere was there such ignorance, impiety, concubinage, incest, larceny, perjury and thirst for revenge. The people always went armed and murdered for a trifle; they took revenge not only on all who had offended them but on their relations up to the third degree inclusive. Hence the island, though beautiful and fertile, was sparsely inhabited. Difficulties such as these did not, however, daunt the Missionaries, and God blessed their confidence.

One day during a sermon, a man who was present, touched by something the preacher had said, rose from his seat and cried aloud : 'That is enough, Father, let me speak. I ask pardon of every Christian soul for the scandal I have given by refusing to be reconciled with my enemy; I am

⁶⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. IV, pp. 68 and foll.

now ready, call him.' The enemy approached, both embraced and made peace, and their example was at once followed by all who had not yet performed their duty. On another occasion, also during a sermon, a man mounted the steps of the pulpit, plucked the preacher's cassock and laid at the feet of the crucifix the weapons he was carrying; whereupon, there was a similar demand for forgiveness and similar scenes of embracing.

The clergy were not exempt from the popular passions, and assassins were to be found amongst them. A parish priest was vesting in the sacristy, for he had the honour of carrying the Blessed Sacrament in the general procession that brought the mission to a close. After putting on the alb, he took a pistol and stuck it in his girdle; his hand was stretched out for a second when Father Martin interposed, saying : 'Is it necessary to be armed when one is with Our Lord?' 'Sir,' replied the priest, 'it is easily seen that you do not belong to this country. When a relative or a friend of an ecclesiastic is engaged in a quarrel the first person on whom vengeance is taken is the priest. Hence I must always be on my guard. I never leave my pistol aside when I celebrate Mass; why should I do so when I carry the Blessed Sacrament? However, to please you, I shall be satisfied to-day with one pistol.' The Canons, parish priests and other ecclesiastics met every day and were instructed in their duties, taught how to make a meditation, and prepared for a general confession. The parish clergy publicly begged the people to forget the scandal they had given, and an entire Chapter did the same through the mouth of one of its members.

The faithful, for their part, behaved excellently; the number of reconciliations was immense; with the help of a notary, a sponge was passed over false accusations, false testimonies in the law-courts, and acts prejudicial to the honour and interest of others. Concubinage disappeared almost completely, and women who had publicly flaunted their depravity called all the faithful to bear witness to their repentance; when one of them publicly accused herself of her sin, a number of others, moved by her example, also rose up and humbled themselves. In Corsica, as elsewhere, wherever a mission was given, Confraternities of Charity were established.

When the Fathers arrived at Campo di Loro, the diocese, deprived of its bishop, was governed by two Vicars General, one of whom was appointed by Propaganda, and the other by the Chapter. What one commanded the other forbade and vice-versa; if one pronounced a sentence of excommunication the other rescinded it, and each had of course his partisans. Although hampered by such unfavourable conditions, the mission nevertheless produced excellent results. The two rivals came to see the harm they were inflicting on the diocese, and worked together in future.

The mission preached at Niolo is famous in Corsican annals. If ever people were in need of the exhortations of the Missionaries it was certainly those of Niolo; large numbers lived in concubinage and even incest, and such liaisons shocked nobody; they were thought to be as respectable as any others. Forgiveness of injuries was looked on as a sign of weakness; if a man was insulted and did not avenge it, he was treated as a poltroon; children, even from their tenderest years, were taught by their parents that no insult was to be left unavenged. This perversion of the moral sense was mainly due to ignorance of the truths of religion ; scarcely anyone knew the commandments of God and the Apostles' Creed. When asked : 'How many Gods are there? one or many?' or 'How many persons are there in God?' or 'Which of the three divine Persons was made man?' they did not even know what the questions meant. The Missionaries were confronted with the difficult task of elevating a people that had fallen so low, but they resolutely set to work. When the time came for the sermon, the church was full to overflowing, every man was present with a sword at his side and a gun over his shoulder ; some who were called bandits also carried two or three pistols and a couple of daggers in their belts. Fathers Blatiron and Martin spoke frequently on the forgiveness of injuries, adjuring the people, with tears in their eyes, to forget old wrongs; they pointed out the beauty, nobility and grandeur of forgiveness of which Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us such an example. Their words seemed to find

no echo in the hearts of their hearers, some of whom ostentatiously walked out of the church as a protest whenever the preachers referred to the subject. At length, after a fortnight, a young man who had been wounded in the head by a pistol-shot, openly declared that he forgave his enemy. This slight success encouraged the Missionaries who redoubled their efforts, but they still met with no response and nothing seemed capable of touching these hardened hearts. Though the mission was drawing to a close, the Fathers could not make up their minds to depart and leave the Devil master of the situation. On the eve of the general Communion, at the end of the sermon, Father Blatiron, after a fresh exhortation on the forgiveness of injuries, took his crucifix in his hand and pointing to it said : 'All who are ready to forgive come up and kiss your crucified Saviour ; He calls on you to do so ; behold Him ! He stretches out His arms to you; do not refuse Him this proof of your love; I implore you to come.' These words, pronounced in a voice trembling with emotion. moved their hearts; the men began to look at one another; they were prepared to advance towards the crucifix but each said to himself, 'Shall I be the only one to make this gesture of forgiveness?' Self-esteem held them back, but Father Blatiron saw that he had won. He waited a moment; nobody moved; he hid the crucifix and seemed as if about to go. 'No,' he cried out, ' you do not deserve the grace and blessing offered you by Jesus Christ; God will withdraw Himself from you seeing that you, by your hardness of heart, withdraw yourselves from Him.' Scarcely had he said these words than a priest of the reformed Franciscans cried out : 'Oh ! Niolo ! Oh ! Niolo ! do you then desire to be accursed by God, you who refuse the graces brought you by these Missionaries who have come from so far to secure your salvation? ' The congregation became more and more deeply moved. A parish priest then arose, and, prostrating himself on the ground, asked for the crucifix to be presented After kissing it, he turned to the murderer of to him. his nephew, saying : 'I forgive you, and to show that all is forgotten, come here that I may embrace you.' His example was followed by that of another priest, and then

the entire congregation formed up in line behind him awaiting their turn to kiss the crucifix. A notary was fetched so that the most important reconciliations might be officially recorded. At this touching spectacle the Missionaries thanked God that success—and what a success ! -had at last crowned their efforts. On the following morning, before the general Communion, Father Blatiron urged his hearers to testify publicly once more, in the presence of the God of love who was so soon to unite Himself to them, that they no longer had any enemies. He was immediately obeyed; the faithful begged the clergy to forgive them and the clergy made a similar petition to their people. When all was over, Father Blatiron said; 'You have just given a noble example, and God will bless it; is there anyone yet amongst you who has not forgiven his enemies?' 'I know several,' said a priest, mentioning their names; the persons referred to approached the Blessed Sacrament, which was exposed, and, without being requested, embraced their enemies. Father Blatiron thus ends his account : 'O my Saviour ! What edification on earth and what joy in Heaven at the sight of those fathers and mothers who, for the love of God, have forgiven the murder of their children, wives of their husbands, children of their parents, brothers and relations of their dearest, and finally, at the sight of so many persons embracing and weeping over their enemies ! In other countries it is a common enough sight to see penitents weeping before their confessors, but in Corsica it is a little miracle.'61

Father Martin's outstanding skill and eloquence greatly contributed to the extraordinary success of the mission at Niolo. The house at Genoa lost him in 1655, when he was transferred to the new establishment at Turin. Henceforward, Piedmont became the theatre of his apostolic zeal; he travelled all over the province, everywhere calling on sinners to do penance. His portrait was eagerly sought for, and placed beside pictures of the saints in private houses; when it was known that he was preaching in any district, crowds thronged from a distance to hear his words. When

⁶¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. V.; ms., notice on Father Martin.

the time for his sermon arrived, shops were shut and all public business suspended. None of the churches was large enough to contain the crowds that came to hear him ; all the altars, save two or three, were removed and tiers of benches erected inside the church, or, if necessary, all round At times, when there were ten, fifteen and twenty it. thousand persons present, such arrangements proved insufficient, and the people gathered in the public squares or in the fields. He had a special gift of arousing sorrow for sin and even for drawing tears from his hearers, and hence, even when there were fifteen or twenty confessors present, they were surrounded on all sides. In Winter as in Summer the faithful arrived in the middle of the night in order to be first for confession, but had frequently to take their places after others who had been there since the previous evening. The rich sent their servants to retain a place, and the poor made a lucrative business out of keeping seats for others. They came to Father Martin even when he was at his meals or snatching a little sleep; one evening on going to his room to retire to rest, a man crept out from under the bed where he had been hiding all day waiting for his opportunity.

Ecclesiastics, both those of the pastoral and of the regular clergy, took part in the missions; they were present at the sermons, made their general confession, and attended the conferences especially arranged for them.

Hatreds, ancient grudges and the thirst for revenge, all vanished at Father Martin's words; enemies forgot their reciprocal wrongs; parents of victims who had fallen under the blows of an assassin forgave the murderer. After his sermon, men embraced who would gladly have shed each other's blood the previous evening, and even at times, to seal the bond of friendship, invited their old enemies to a meal. His mere presence was enough to restrain men, mad with rage, prepared to hurl themselves on their enemies, with arms in their hands and thirsting for blood. On one occasion, during a public festival, the market place resounded with cries of rage; the people had risen in revolt against their lord and were preparing to attack his supporters. As Father Martin alone could prevent carnage they hurried to the Church in which he happened to be, whilst a cleric sought to calm the crowd, or rather, to gain time. The Missionary arrived and simply said: Follow me,' to the excited crowd ; he led them into the church for Vespers and gave a catechetical instruction. Peace was completely restored. In another locality a dispute broke out before the customary procession on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The various parishes who were to take part in the function could not agree about the order of precedence. Weapons quickly appeared in men's hands and those who had none hurried home to procure some. Father Martin was about to ascend the pulpit and was at once told of what was happening; he arrived just in time and with a few words calmed their angry passions. The procession passed off quietly, and when it was over, all went and listened peacefully to his sermon. On another occasion, after a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, a dispute arose as to which of the chief men of the district were to have the honour of carrying the canopy. Father Martin gave his opinion to which no one paid any attention; it occurred to him that it would be a good idea to preach by giving an example; he took his place at the head of the procession, asked the cleric who was to carry the cross to let him have it, and then waited for the signal for departure. His act of humility restored peace. In April, 1656, he gave a mission at Scalenghe and preached before a crowd of four or five thousand men which contained fifty ecclesiastics and all the nobility of the surrounding country. The faithful waited eight days in the church for an opportunity to go to confession.

At Luserna there were even larger crowds ; eight or nine thousand were present for the general Communion. The Missionary, in order to afford everybody an opportunity of hearing the sermon, preached in the public square. One of his hearers was listening attentively, with his back to a wall ; suddenly, through the fault of his neighbour, a brick fell on his head. 'Great Heaven !' he cried out, 'if that had happened to me at any other time !' When astonishment was expressed at his patience, he said : 'Ah, well, my sins deserved that and much more.' He stepped aside for a

while and returned with his head bandaged to hear the rest of the sermon; he might easily have revenged himself, for, like all his fellow-citizens, he was carrying two or three pistols and a number of swords. From Luserna the Fathers moved on to a large town about a league and a half distant. Murders were frequently perpetrated there, thirty in twelve years, and the state of angry excitement in which the people lived, divided as they were into two hostile camps, caused deep misgivings. Though the Missionaries remained only two days, yet their sermons proved effective. On the Feast of Corpus Christi, the ceremony of reconciliation took place in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament which was exposed. The leaders of the rival factions approached the altar, placed their hands on the Holy Gospels, swore that they forgave each other from their hearts, and signed, in the presence of a notary, a treaty of peace and concord. The Te Deum was then sung in the church in thanksgiving for the happy event just accomplished.

The Missionaries spent the end of 1656 and the beginning of 1657 at Racconigi to which they had been sent by the Archbishop of Turin at the request of its inhabitants. They found the people in excellent dispositions, and the clergy, consisting of forty priests and clerics, faithfully attended the weekly conference which was held for their special benefit and which they decided to continue after the mission was A Confraternity of Charity was established and a over. large number of acts of restitution and of reconciliations were effected. As the Missionaries were unable to hear the confessions of all who approached them, they sought and obtained the assistance of four of the local clergy and several members of religious Orders, but even with this help, they still were unable to satisfy all who wished to go to confession during the six weeks which the mission lasted. People came searching for them at midnight and amongst those who were waiting were many who had spent several days and nights beside the confessional.

Five years later, Savigliano cordially responded to the Fathers' zealous efforts. The pastoral clergy, the members of five or six religious Orders, the local gentry, the faithful, all or nearly all attended the exercises and approached the

Some religious and ecclesiastics from Turin sacraments. were of great assistance in hearing confessions. A few battalions of soldiers, then in winter quarters at Savigliano waiting for the day, now close to hand, when they would be exposed once more to the perils of battle, assisted at the exercises during one week of the mission and many of them approached the sacrament of Penance. The civic authorities gave orders that all shops were to be closed at the times fixed for the various exercises and also that no business should be transacted on market days during these hours. More than a hundred ecclesiastics assisted at the special conferences arranged for the clergy. One of the priests who had come to assist the Missionaries fell sick shortly after his arrival; on his death bed, in the midst of all his sufferings, he repeated : 'Humility ! Humility ! I shall be lost without His funeral was the occasion of a touching humility.' demonstration : all the inhabitants, including the members of religious Orders, followed the corpse to the cemetery, taper in hand. The city would have been well pleased to have a house of the Congregation established for five or six Missionaries, and negotiations were opened, through the Marquis di Pianezze, but they came to nothing.

When the Oueen Regent, Christina of France, Duchess of Savoy, learned of the wonders effected by the sermons of the Missionaries, she had recourse to them to restore peace in various places troubled by fatal dissensions. In October, 1657, Bra seemed to be a city in the throes of revolution; one section of the people had risen against another ; barricades were erected and it was almost impossible to walk through the streets. Men slew their enemies even in the churches ; they escaladed houses to effect a forcible entry. and all were constantly on the alert. A mission was impossible unless the inhabitants agreed to a truce, and the Oueen sent her principal ministers of State to negotiate one. They were not discouraged by a preliminary check but persevered and won; an agreement was reached that no arms should be carried during the mission. The Fathers arrived in January and continued their labours for seven weeks; they were completely successful, and Father Martin reported that from nine to ten thousand general confessions had been

heard. On February 6, he wrote to Paris : 'God has been pleased to dispose the hearts of the inhabitants to mutual pardon and forgiveness. . . . They have embraced one another in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament,' after ' they had reciprocally begged pardon. . . . We are now busy hearing confessions. Although we have asked all the local priests and religious, who are numerous, to help us, I do not know when we shall be able to finish.' Confessions were heard far into the night, and the faithful, despite the cold, never grew weary of waiting beside the confessionals. The Carnival was spent in devout and penitential exercises. 'The inhabitants,' wrote Father Martin at the end of the mission, ' are amazed to see such a perfect reconciliation.... They never remember to have seen such perfect union and cordiality and have informed the Oueen Mother of the fact.' Her Majesty wished to have an account of the mission from the lips of Father Martin himself, and when she heard it. she was moved to tears. A general amnesty was proclaimed for all the guilty parties. The wonderful transformation effected in Bra was much talked of, and people began to hope that other towns, suffering from similar evils, might be cured by similar remedies.

The Missionaries were invited by the inhabitants themselves, at the suggestion of the local nobleman, to Sanfre, a town near Bra, where divisions of forty years standing had led to brawls, murders, arson and every form of destruction as was shown by the flight from the place of all who sought personal security. Their influence proved stronger than that of the Senate of Piedmont which had previously intervened without result. After the third day the battle was won. The ceremony of general reconciliation, fixed for the following day, was carried out in the usual manner before a large audience which had arrived from places far distant : enemies embraced in church, asked for forgiveness and swore perpetual peace with their hands on the Gospels and in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. An amnesty enabled the guilty to return to their deserted homes and to cultivate their lands. A man in prison, condemned to death, benefited by this act of clemency.

In March, 1658, a mission was given at Cavallere-

Maggiore, a town of from four to five thousand communicants, where hitherto fights and lawsuits had been the order of the day. The Missionaries, chosen by the inhabitants themselves as arbitrators of all disputes and differences, pronounced decisions to which the people willingly submitted. Three months later, the citizens of Fossano welcomed them with equal joy, and the crowds were so great that the church could not contain them. Long-standing abuses were abolished and devotional practices introduced, such as evening prayers in common, general Communion every three months and a weekly conference for ecclesiastics, which were continued after the Missionaries had left. They remained for forty days in Cherasco during the months of May and June, but left before they were able to accomplish all that was needed ; if they had had twenty priests to assist them, and had remained two weeks longer, even that would not have sufficed to meet the needs of the place. Murder seemed to be endemic in the district; in a neighbouring town four men were assassinated by their enemies on the evening before the mission opened. The Fathers pacified men's minds, but their efforts, from want of time, were neither sufficiently extensive nor far reaching; they probably meant to return but we do not know if circumstances permitted them to do so.62

The foregoing pages enable us to gauge how valuable a means were missions for the restoration of faith, morality and even social order. The Bishops fully realised this truth. At the present time, at least in France, there is not a prelate who does not wish to have a house of Missionaries in his diocese, and the work tends to become, just as much as seminaries, one of the chief features of diocesan organisation. When Vincent de Paul preached his first missionary sermon at Folleville, he saw by an intuition of genius, the fruitfulness of apostolic missionary labours. No one has done more than he to spread the practice and assure its organisation.

Amongst modern ecclesiastical institutions, whose value Saint Vincent foresaw, were two to which we shall now call attention : elementary schools and catechism lessons for children.

⁶² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. VI, pp. 81 and foll.

CHAPTER XLVI

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

ROM a very early period Saint Vincent de Paul began to think of the education of poor children in country places. We have already seen him urging his Confraternities of Charity to set up primary schools wherever they could find a person sufficiently well qualified to teach. As these associations could only with difficulty discover, either amongst their own members or elsewhere, school-mistresses of the type required he resolved always to send at least two Daughters of Charity, one for the sick and the other for young girls, wherever their services were requested.

Hence a fixed time was set apart for the practice of reading and writing in the order of day established in the Mother House;¹ hence, too, both at La Chapelle and at Saint Lawrence, schools for little girls were established so that the young sisters might be trained to teach. When Saint Vincent speaks to the Sisters in his conferences or regulations, on the works of the Company, he always mentions two: the service of the poor and the education of youth,² and hence the second was in his eyes not a mere accessory work of minor importance. Even in Paris, where it was easier to find schoolmistresses than in country places, the Sisters attached to Confraternities of Charity spent their free time, which indeed was scanty, in teaching young girls. The word ' sometimes ' employed by Saint Vincent³ shows that classes were not held regularly. It is probable that Sisters in charge of hospitals acted in the same manner as those of the

¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IX, p. 219.

- ² Ibid., p. 483.
- ⁸ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 549; Vol. III, p. 54.

Parisian Confraternities, when their governor allowed them to do so.⁴

It was in country districts that these primary or 'Charity' schools functioned most regularly. No remuneration was accepted. Usually only poor children were allowed to attend, but in places where rich families had no school-mistress to teach their children, exceptions were tolerated, at the request of the parents and after the parish priest had approved, 'provided,' the regulations go on to say,⁵ ' that poor girls shall always be preferred to rich, and that the latter do not despise the former.'

It proved to be more difficult to exclude boys; the chief inconvenience was that, in the absence of a schoolmaster, that is to say almost everywhere, boys were deprived of the education given to their little sisters. Parents did not understand why boys should be excluded, and begged that the benefits granted to their daughters should be shared by their sons. On October 30, 1647, Saint Louise de Marillac explained their desires to the Council; she herself thought that exceptions should be made, but Saint Vincent spoke in favour of complete exclusion, alleging in support of his view, royal ordinances, episcopal prohibitions and the dangers, from the moral standpoint, of mixed schools. He wound up the discussion as follows : 'For all these reasons, my Daughters, it would be well if they are not admitted at all. Two or three of us are of this opinion, and the matter should rest there.'6

Secular instruction did not go very far : a child who had learned to read and write had completed its studies.⁷ In several places the children learned to recite little poems accompanied by graceful gestures. The Sisters' regulations

⁴ It would be difficult to assert definitely that Sisters in charge of hospitals, or at least one of them, were also engaged in teaching. Saint Vincent has written so ambiguously on this point that no certain conclusion can be drawn.

⁵ Rules for Sisters teaching in Schools, article 27. The definitive edition of these rules was drawn up in 1672 but we may be certain that it reproduces, in substance and almost in form a first set of regulations drawn up by Saint Vincent.

⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XIII, pp. 646-649.

⁷ Ibid., p. 570.

were told to ask pardon; others were ordered to explate their faults by kissing the ground, by kneeling down for the space of a *Miserere*, by taking up their position on a special bench, which was known as that of "the little donkey," or finally, by being deprived of a portion of their sweetmeats. In addition to these were the ferule and the whip, redoubtable instruments and yet not very cruel; the ferule was employed on the open hand of the little culprit, but was to be used in moderation; the whip was chiefly dreaded on account of the shame it inspired. The mistress, says the rule,¹⁵ 'shall only use the whip very rarely and that for notable faults and give only five or six strokes, and she shall always remove the children to be punished to a remote part of the school, out of view of the others.'

School lasted from half-past eight in the morning to halfpast five in the afternoon, with two intervals, one at eleven o'clock, or even half-past ten, and the other at half-past two.¹⁶ All the little girls did not attend regularly; some were careless and neither the gentle and affectionate remonstrances of the Sisters nor the distribution of little books, pictures and rosary-beads, proved able to attract them.¹⁷ Others, such as those who had to mind sheep and cows, were unable to leave their duties; in such cases the Sisters were accustomed to visit them after school-hours; they taught the children either in their own homes or in the fields or walking along the roads.¹⁸ Those who were unable to reach school in time were admitted whenever they arrived.¹⁹ Strict punctuality was enjoined on all who were really well able to attend, and the better to obtain it prizes were given to the most assiduous.²⁰

In this way, thanks to the Daughters of Charity, little girls were brought up in the fear and love of God; their minds and hearts were penetrated with the truths of their religion, and they acquired habits and beliefs that were to

¹⁵ Rules for Sisters in schools, art. 13.

¹⁶ Ibid., art. 16, 18, 19.

17 Ibid., art. 6.

¹⁸ Rules for Sisters in parishes, art. 5.

¹⁹ Rules for Sisters in schools, art. 8; Rules for Sisters in parishes, art. 4.

20 Ibid., art. 24.

express a fear lest this exercise might flatter the vanity of pupils and teachers, but as it may prove useful in the cultivation of the memory, it is permitted, provided due moderation and discretion are observed.⁸

Moral training, the teaching of the truths of religion and also devotional exercises were given pride of place.⁹ It was rightly thought that one of the chief duties of society towards children is to inspire them with a love of virtue and a hatred of vice, and that nobility of sentiment, modesty and purity of life are of a higher order than mere cultivation of the mind. It was also thought that man's duty to God comes before all others, and hence the children were taught to know, love and pray to God.

One of the first things to be done with beginners was to engrave the customary vocal prayers in their memories.¹⁰ There were two special lessons in Catechism given every week, one on Thursday afternoon and the other on Saturday morning.¹¹ Only the most essential elements of Christian Doctrine, prayer, the mysteries of religion and the sacraments, especially those of Penance and the Eucharist, were taught by the school-mistress.¹²

School in those days was regarded not only as a place where religion should be well taught but also as a place where it should be practised, hence morning and evening prayers were recited in common, the former after the arrival and the latter before the departure of the children.¹³ The school also enabled the Sisters to have the little girls close at hand to be led to church on the eves of the principal Feasts for Confession, on the eves of Feasts of Our Lady for Vespers, and during the week preceding their First Communion, to be prepared for the great day.¹⁴

Then as now, little girls were not always well-behaved, they had to be corrected, but the punishment was not severe. Those who had in any way offended their little comrades

¹¹ Ibid., art. 20.

- ¹⁰ Ibid., art. 17.
- ¹² Rules for Sisters in villages, art. 6.
- 13 Rules for Sisters in schools, arts. 17 and 19.
- 14 Ibid., art. 21, 22.

⁸ Rules, Art. 8.

⁹ Ibid., art. 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14.

remain with them for life. Saint Vincent saw that the school was a powerful means of promoting a true Christian life and hence he made good use of it.

This man, who seemed born to live with the humble, was led by force of circumstances to frequent the society of the great; to this he resigned himself, because he was thus enabled to effect more easily the reformation of the Church of France and to assist the poor and afflicted, the two works to which he had consecrated his life.

CHAPTER XLVII

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL AT COURT

AINT VINCENT did not love and never sought the Court. A character such as his, simple, upright, hostile to intrigue and scandal, could never breathe easily in a superficially polished atmosphere where the maxims of the world took precedence of those of the Gospel. He needed a less contaminated air. Glory, honours, pleasures, all that tempts the courtier, simply inspired him with disgust. He was a man of the people and felt himself drawn to the people; he was also an apostle and preferred the apostolic life of the priest, every moment of which is devoted to the salvation of souls, to frequenting the society of ' the great.' And yet he did frequent the Court, for he overcame his repugnance out of obedience to Anne of Austria. It is probable that this devout Queen had heard of him from her Ladies of Honour and especially from such as were members of the Company of Ladies of Charity. Charmed by all that she had heard of his charity, wisdom, sanctity and labours, she conceived a profound admiration for Vincent de Paul, put her trust in him and profited by the advice which he gave her for the good of her soul and the welfare of the State, and which, coming from a man so universally esteemed and consulted even by Richelieu himself, she realised was of the utmost value. She turned to him for priests to give missions at Court and in the provinces menaced by heresy; summoned him to the sick-bed of Louis XIII to prepare that monarch for death ; she appointed him, at the beginning of her regency, to the Council of Conscience set up to deal with the ecclesiastical affairs of the Kingdom, assisted him with abundant alms, and established houses of his Missionaries and of his Daughters of Charity.

It was during the siege of Perpignan that Louis XIII felt



LOUIS XIII

the first attacks of the disease of which he was to die. On February 21, 1643, after six months of increasing debility, his state began to give rise to uneasiness; the pure air of Saint-Germain proved powerless to effect a cure. Fever, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, a dry, persistent cough and the formation of several abscesses, provided only too legitimate grounds for the fears of those around him. He had become so weak and thin that the sight of him moved every heart to pity. Up to April he had been strong enough to take a little walk in the gallery adjoining his room, but on the 3rd of that month, he could only drag himself along with difficulty, and from then onwards he was unable to leave his room. Death was approaching with rapid strides, and no one was better aware of the fact than Louis himself; he prepared for death by purifying his conscience every day in the Sacrament of Penance, and by remaining in close union with God, a union that was fostered by devout conversation and the reading of devotional works. Notwithstanding his sufferings, he carried out faithfully all his duties as a King, held councils with his ministers, kept himself informed of the condition of the poor and the wretched, and watched over the interests of the Church.¹

A number of episcopal sees and abbeys were vacant. In the course of a conversation on the subject with his confessor, Father Dinet,² he said : 'I should like to provide them with capable ecclesiastics, suitable by their virtues for the positions; think over it; enquire from those who know, Jesuits or others, and most especially from M. Vincent and bring me a list on which the names are inscribed in order of merit.' Father Dinet obeyed and tells us that: 'The bishoprics were granted in a holy manner, and the abbeys in a charitable manner.'³ The King did not forget Lorraine,

¹ There are two accounts extant of the death of Louis XIII, one written by his confessor, Father Dinet (*Idée d'une belle mort ou d'une mort chrétienne dans le récit de la fin heureuse de Louis XIII*, Paris, 1656, folio); the other by Jacques Dubois, his valet (Arch. du Minist. des Aff. Etrang., France, Mémoires et Documents, 848, f°. 31-44; published in Michaud and Poujoulat's Mémoires, Vol. XI, pp. 523-531).

² Dinet, op. cit., pp. 14 and 41.

³ Ibid., op. cit., p. 42.

then suffering from the triple plagues of war, pestilence and famine; he gave orders that Saint Vincent should be supplied with a large sum of money so that alms might be distributed to the famine-stricken through his Missionaries.

As the King was growing weaker day by day, he thought it time to receive the Last Sacraments, and said so to Father Dinet and to his chief almoner, Dominic Séguier, Bishop of Meaux : they both calmed his impatience by assuring him that they would let him know when his end was at hand. The night of April 18-19 proved to be a bad one for the patient, and when morning dawned and the King saw his chief physician, Bouvard, at his bedside, he said : 'I know quite well I shall not recover; do not be afraid to tell me the truth.' The doctor simply said : 'Sire, it is true that Your Majesty is very ill.' The thought of death never left his mind all that day. From the room which he occupied in his new palace of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, he could see the ancient Abbey of Saint-Denis; 'Open the window,' he said, 'so that I may see my last resting place,' and he gazed at it for a long time. The day was not far distant when his body was to be placed in the silent crypt where slept the former Kings of France. On the 23rd a crisis supervened that nearly proved fatal; the Bishop of Meaux hastily administered the Sacrament of Extreme Unction in the presence of Father Dinet, Philip Cospeau, Bishop of Lisieux, M. de Ventadour, Canon of Notre-Dame and the chief personages of the Court.

Anne of Austria, in her grief, desired one consolation : that her august spouse should be assisted in the hour of death by Vincent de Paul. She discreetly mentioned the matter to the sick man, who replied : 'Yes, most gladly, if my confessor agrees'; Father Dinet asked for nothing better than to satisfy the Queen, and Vincent de Paul was hastily summoned and arrived at Saint-Germain on the same day. 'Sire,' said he to the King on entering, ' timenti Deum bene erit in extremis,' and Louis completed the verse : 'Et in die defunctionis suæ benedicetur.'⁴ During that night and the morning of the 23rd the patient's condition remained

⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XXXVI, p. 171.

stationary, and in the afternoon, to the surprise and delight of all, it improved considerably. Louis XIII loved music; he expressed a wish to have a lutanist play upon his instrument whilst he and four noblemen sang Godeau's paraphrases of the Psalms of David to airs composed by himself. The transformation was so complete that more than one believed that the King had quite recovered. Saint Vincent, his mind now at rest, returned to Saint-Lazare where he announced the good news.

For the remainder of the month of April, the King was fairly well, but on May 1, when the news spread that the patient had had a bad night, men's hearts were again oppressed with grief which kept increasing, for Louis grew worse day by day. On Tuesday, May 12, at the Queen's request, Saint Vincent returned to Saint-Germain. He found the Bishops of Meaux and Lisieux, Father Dinet and Canon de Ventadour in the royal bed-chamber, and he joined with them in preparing the sick man for his last hour. Louis XIII was awaiting Death, which, indeed, he desired and had prepared for; his soul was already living in the next world. The chaplain's task was therefore easy: 'Never,' wrote Saint Vincent, ' have I seen greater nobility of soul, greater tranquillity, greater dread of the slightest atoms that seemed sinful, greater kindness or sounder judgement in a person in this state.'⁵ The dving man never wearied of hearing them speak of the greatness of God. the pains of Purgatory, the vanities of this world. He questioned, in turn, some of the ecclesiastics who remained with him. 'What,' said he to Saint Vincent, 'is the best preparation for death ? ' ' Sire,' was the reply, ' I can suggest nothing better than the example of Our Lord : complete and perfect submission of one's will to that of our heavenly Father, a submission manifested by the words : non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat.'-- 'O my Jesus !' said the King, 'I too desire it with all my heart. Yes, my God, I say and I am resolved to say to the last breath of my life : fiat voluntas tua; may Thy will be done according to Thy good pleasure.'6

⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 393.

⁶ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. VIII, Sect. II, p. 88.

He questioned Saint Vincent again on the good use of God's graces, and the fervour and sweetness of the Saint's words moved the King so deeply that he said : 'O Monsieur Vincent! if I recover, the bishops shall remain three years with you.'7 The sick man, however, no longer hoped to recover; 'Look, Monsieur Vincent,' he said with his eyes turned towards the Abbey of Saint-Denis, 'my body will soon be carried there.' Then, raising his emaciated arm, he sorrowfully said : ' Is that the arm of a King ?''

At times he was distressed by the fear of Purgatory and of Hell. Father Dinet told him that the longer an illness lasts, the greater the merit of the patient, and consequently, the less he has to explate in the next life. 'Father,' he replied, 'I do not think of that; if God left me for a hundred years in Purgatory, I should deem myself happy not to remain there longer.'

The doctors, hoping that a little nourishment might give him strength, strongly urged him to consent to take some soup or eggs; one of them even knelt down and with tears in his eyes begged the King to consent. Nothing could move him; 'My friends,' he said, 'all is over, death is at hand and a little soup will not restore me to life,' and he turned his back on them. After reflecting for some time. he felt remorse for refusing and said to the Saint whom he saw beside him : 'Monsieur Vincent, the doctors have been urging me to take some food and I have refused, for indeed I must die ; what do you advise me ?' 'Sire,' he replied, ' the doctors have advised you to take a little nourishment because it is one of their maxims that the sick should always take some. As long as the last breath of life remains, doctors always hope a moment will come when they will be able to restore health to their patients. And hence, if Your Majesty pleases, I think you would do well to take what the doctor has prescribed.'⁹ The King followed the Saint's advice ; he asked for some soup and drank it.

That evening there were clear indications that his death agony was at hand. His physicians, convinced that their

⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. VIII, Sect. II, p. 88.

⁸ Robineau, ms., p. 73.
⁹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. X, p. 342.

patient would not last through the next day, informed Father Dinet of their fears and the latter told the King, who, guite pleased at the good news, recited a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving. He made his confession and received the Holy Viaticum from the Bishop of Meaux, edifying the bystanders by his great devotion. Tears were seen rolling down his emaciated cheeks as he received the Sacred Host. The Oueen and the Duke of Beaufort watched through the night, and when the morning of May 13 dawned, the King was still breathing; he was fully conscious and recognised those who stood around him. When he observed the Prince de Condé, he made a sign for him to approach and said : 'Sir, I know quite well that the enemy has crossed our frontiers with a large and powerful army, but your son will put them to shame and win a glorious victory.' All at Court were ignorant of the advance of the Spanish Army, and the Prince, thinking the King was delirious, whispered in Father Dinet's ear : 'Look after the King for he is sinking rapidly, and, if I am not mistaken, his brain is troubled.' His brain may, perhaps, have been affected but if Father Dinet reports facts correctly, and it is he who mentions this incident, it must be confessed that sometimes reality and delirium strangely coincide, for the Duc d'Enghien, after a splendid victory over the Spaniards, captured Rocroi on May 19.

The King was thinking more of another victory, that which would open to him the gates of Heaven. He asked that the little crucifix, the two breviaries, and a ritual which he had long ago put aside to be used during his last moments, should be brought and placed beside him. A marker, inserted at his request, enabled the prayers for the departing soul to be found immediately. After he had given his instructions to his confessor, he asked when would the particular judgement take place ; Father Dinet calmed his fears, sustained his confidence and aroused his desires for Heaven ; at the mere mention of the word 'Paradise,' the King seemed to wish to depart thither without further delay. If the priest began a quotation from the Scriptures, the King completed the verse. 'Quam dilecta tabernacula tua, Domine virtutum,' said the former, 'Concupiscit et deficit anima

mea in atria Domini,' continued the latter, and the dialogue went on without an interruption due to failing memory. 'Cum dederit dilectis suis somnum-Ecce haereditas Domini, filii, merces fructus ventris'; 'Expecta Dominum, viriliter age-Et confortetur cor tuum et sustine Dominum'; 'Veni cito, Domine Jesu-Etiam veni cito, Domine Jesu.' In the evening, when darkness had fallen, at the King's request a few chapters of the life of Jesus Christ taken from the Gospels were read aloud to him. He grew drowsy whilst they read and his mind almost immediately began to wander in dreams which those around could follow by listening attentively. He awoke and asked news of the Queen. Two hours after midnight, he again began to feel drowsy and to dream. The following day, May 14, the Feast of the Ascension, was a day of grief and mourning in the Castle of Saint-Germain. When the curtains were drawn and the light of day penetrated the room, the watchers realised on looking at the King's face with its glassy eyes and wandering expression that he could not live through the day. He himself hastened the preparations for the celebration of Mass at which he assisted devoutly. All the chaplains said Mass in turn.

The doctors suggested that the King should take a little milk; when he was raised up so as to help him to swallow, the movement exhausted his failing strength; he lost his powers of respiration almost completely and fell back seemingly lifeless on the pillow. He was allowed to rest quietly and to regain his breath. His first words were addressed to the physicians : 'Do you think I can live until to-morrow ?' Bouvard took his hand, felt the pulse for a long time and replied : 'Sire, as a rule, it is between two and three o'clock in the afternoon that Your Majesty is worst; if you are then too weak, the crisis may well lead to the result we fear.' The King understood; he raised his eves to Heaven, joined his hands, prayed for a considerable time and then uttered the words of gratitude : 'God be praised !' and, 'My God, Thy Will be done !' Then occurred a touching scene that drew tears from all eyes. The King turned towards the Bishop of Meaux and said : 'It is time for me to say good-bye.' The Queen advanced

and both embraced long and tenderly; they exchanged some remarks that were not overheard, whilst tears fell down their cheeks. Before retiring, Anne of Austria led forward her two children: the Dauphin and the little Duke of Anjou. Then came the Duke of Orléans and the Prince of Condé. As those present passed before him, the King embraced some, gave his hand to be kissed to others or contented himself with simply pressing theirs. He twice embraced Father Dinet, who said to him : 'Sire, if the doctors' fears come true, Your Majesty will die on a Friday, for, as far as the Church is concerned, Friday begins with First Vespers, that is to say after midday.' When all the farewells were over, a blessed candle was lighted, a crucifix placed before the King and the five chaplains, robed in their surplices, began to recite the prayers for a departing soul, reserving for a later moment those especially appropriate for the moment of death. The King understood and answered all the prayers.

The hour for the midday meal was at hand, and at his request, all present withdrew to partake of it. When alone with his confessor, he told him that he was afraid of the final combat with the demon. He thought that it would be his faith that would be attacked, but Father Dinet undeceived him. 'How then shall I be tempted?' said 'Sire,' replied the priest, ' probably with the sick man. aversion. The demon is clever enough, by reminding Your Majesty of persons who formerly displeased you, to excite your aversion again.' 'If that should happen,' said the King, 'what should I do?'-'Sire, remember the virtue of charity.'-' I will obey you, Father. Let us agree that if I am tempted in this way, I shall let you know by a movement of the hand. At this sign, you will cry aloud to me "Charity," or some such word.'- Yes, Sire, Your Majesty may rely on me.'-' And now, Father, take this book of the lives of the Saints, place it on that raised desk and read to me some passages from the Passion of Our Saviour.' The reading had not finished before the room was again filled; the two Bishops, Canon de Ventadour and Saint Vincent once more took their places beside the dving man. One of them, Saint Vincent perhaps, took the book from Father

Dinet and continued to read whilst the latter in his turn left the room.

Louis XIII was annoyed to see Marshal de Châtillon in the midst of the noblemen and said to the Bishop of Meaux : ' Inform him through M. de Souvré that his presence here displeases me; at the moment when I am about to appear before God, I should like to be surrounded only with Catholics.' Recollecting himself, he then began to examine his conscience afresh and thought that by refusing food, he might perhaps have shortened his life; his confessor, to set his mind at rest, absolved him once more. The sick man waited with a holy impatience for the moment in which he was to appear before God. He said to his first physician : 'Has the hour not yet come? Do not be afraid to tell me.' Bouvard examined him and then replied with tears : 'It would seem as if Your Majesty will soon be freed from the bonds of this mortal body for I can feel no pulse.' The King immediately cried aloud : 'My God, receive me into Thy Mercy,' and then, turning to the chaplains, said: 'Let us pray to God; there is one of my books; open at the page I have marked and you will find the prayers for the dying; begin them; everything is all right.' The Bishop of Meaux read the prayers, whilst the King, with hands joined and eyes raised to Heaven, followed and responded; the great officials of his Court knelt and listened in a silence only broken by their sobs. The Queen was present and her sorrow was so intense that the Duke of Orléans and the Prince of Condé advised her to withdraw to her own room and supported her to it themselves.

As the dying man's voice grew weaker, Father Dinet begged him to make the responses interiorly and not to fatigue himself by raising his arms towards Heaven. At length the King made a terrified gesture; the priest bent over and heard the words: 'I have thoughts that are tormenting me.' 'You must resist,' said Father Dinet, 'you are in the heart of the combat, if you wish to win the battle, you must fight bravely. Despise your enemies; they can do naught against you. You can see that we are all assisting you with our prayers.' The King's fears were calmed and his peace

of mind restored by these words. He kissed the medals presented to him, especially a medal of Saint Fiacre, and had still strength enough to say: 'Jesus,' and then 'In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.' These were his last words and with the loss of speech went that of hearing; the first spasms of the death-rattle were now audible, coming at first rather quickly and then at longer intervals. At half-past two o'clock in the afternoon Louis XIII rendered his soul to God; the Bishops of Meaux and Lisieux closed his eyes, which seemed to be raised towards Heaven, and then those present approached and sprinkled the corpse with holy water, whilst the chaplains continued their prayers.

On the following day, Saint Vincent wrote to one of his confrères :¹⁰ 'As long as I have been in this world, I have never seen anyone die a more Christian death,' and the account already given shows that he had not exaggerated.

When Louis XIII was dead, Saint Vincent acted the part of consoler to his afflicted widow; he taught her how to bear her burthen of grief and the grateful Queen, in the midst of her tears, said to him: 'Do not forsake me; I place my soul in your hands; guide me in the way of perfection, for I intend to love and serve God.' The holy priest may have brought forward some objections to this proposal; he had a very humble opinion of himself, and he realised only too well all the difficulties inherent in the Queen's suggestion. However, as he always maintained on principle that humility should yield to obedience, he submitted.

Saint Vincent, in his rôle of spiritual guide to Queen Anne of Austria, never abated a single jot or tittle of the principles which sound theology imposes on a priest to whom the care of souls has been committed. He was only too well aware of the influence which a sovereign's example exercises on the members of a Court to neglect such a means of leading them to the practice of a Christian life. Anne of Austria obeyed him implicitly. Despite the contrary advice of time-serving physicians and the murmurs of her

¹⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 393.

courtiers, she observed the laws of fasting and abstinence. We learn from a letter that she astonished the Court by her austerities during the Lent of 1644.¹¹ The Queen was naturally of a devout disposition, and what displeased her most in Jansenism was its rigorism in regard to Holy Communion. She was faithful to the practice of morning prayer, and listened for some minutes whilst a spiritual book was read to her; the thoughts then suggested occupied her mind for the remainder of the day.¹² When a jubilee was celebrated, the people were edified to see the Queen begin the prescribed stations on foot, and she did not make use of her carriage until compelled to do so by fatigue.13

Anne of Austria was a liberal benefactor of many charitable undertakings, and, as may be imagined, she did not forget those inaugurated by Vincent de Paul. She contributed to the relief of Lorraine, when devastated by the passage of the armies,¹⁴ to the Foundling Hospital,¹⁵ and to the work on behalf of ordinands.¹⁶ In her generosity, she even stripped herself of her jewels; she gave Saint Vincent a diamond valued at one thousand livres and a pair of exquisite ear-rings, which were sold for eighteen thousand livres and the proceeds given to the Ladies of Charity. When the Queen made this last gift, she asked that it should be kept secret, but Saint Vincent said : 'Madame, you will forgive me if I cannot keep this virtuous deed hidden; the whole of Paris should hear of it, and I will proclaim it everywhere.'17 She made a present, at Christmas 1638, of a set of beautiful cloth-of-silver vestments

¹¹ Gaudin wrote to Servien, Ambassador to Münster, on March 12, 1644 : 'M. Vincent, ... contrary to the advice of the physicians who had given orders that the Queen was not to fast, has so much power over her that she is observing Lent rigorously.' (Arch. du Minist. des Aff. Etrang., France, Mémoires et Documents, Vol. 849, f°. 116.)

¹² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IX, p. 427.

Ibid., p. 621.
 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 483.
 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 410.

- 16 Abelly, op. cit., Vol. II, Ch. II, Sect. II, p. 217.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, Ch. XI, Sect. II, p. 126.

to the sacristy of Saint-Lazare, in memory of the birth of her son; they were so exquisite that Saint Vincent did not venture to wear them on Christmas Day.¹⁸

As the charity of the Queen was so great, the idea occurred to Saint Vincent of grouping a certain number of the Ladies of the Court under her presidency. He meant to form a sort of super-confraternity which would aim at protecting and assisting parochial confraternities of charity, as well as that established in the Hôtel-Dieu and which would extend its sphere of action to the Foundling Hospital, the galley-slaves, the Magdalen Asylum, and in general, to all charitable undertakings established by women since the beginning of the century, especially the orphanages founded by Mademoiselle de Pollalion and Mademoiselle de Lestang. It was intended to establish as many committees of ladies of Charity as there were works to be sustained, that each committee should consist of three ladies and make it its business to acquire information of the actual state and needs of the work confided to its charge, and finally, that all these matters should be discussed at a general, public meeting.

We have already said that, in all probability, this idea never passed beyond the stage of a mere project.

Saint Vincent advised Anne of Austria carefully to avoid, in her relations with others, anything that might give malicious tongues opportunities of lessening her dignity by unworthy insinuations. The Queen was not always above reproach in this respect; she showed a certain amount of friendship for young noblemen, such as Montmorency and Buckingham, with the natural result that those at Court circulated rumours about her, and as usual, there was a certain amount of truth in their exaggerations. If she had not been aware of what the courtiers were saying about her on this matter, Voiture could have told her. The witty poet was walking one day in a dreamy mood in one of the avenues of the Castle of Rueil when Anne of Austria's coach drove by; he was wakened out of his reverie by the Queen's voice : 'What are you thinking of, M. Voiture ?' Voiture 18 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 213.

improvised a little poem on the spot, of which we give the last verse :

Je pensais, car nous autres poètes, Nous pensons extravagamment, Ce que, dans l'humeur où vous êtes, Vous feriez si, dans ce moment, Vous avisiez à cette place Venir le duc de Buckingham Et lequel serait en disgrâce De lui ou du Père Vincent.¹⁹

In 1648, a rumour spread through Paris that Mazarin himself had taken Buckingham's place. Scurrilous pamphlets entitled Testament véritable du cardinal Jules Mazarin, 20 Requête civile contre la conclusion de la paix,²¹ and Suite du silence au bout du doigt, 22 were published and re-echoed these reports. People added, it was true, that Monsieur Vincent, in order to regularise the situation between the Queen and her First Minister, had married them secretly. This false report, which was then fairly widely spread and which was asserted by certain historians up to the second half of the nineteenth century,²³ turned the minds of some against Saint Vincent. His secretary, Brother Robineau, disturbed by the rumours he had heard, had the curiosity to question the Saint on the matter, and received the reply : 'It is as false as the devil.' This rumour was false as a matter of fact. and doubly so, as the secretary remarks, for not only had Saint Vincent not interfered, but the marriage had never taken place.²⁴

¹⁹ La duchesse d'Aiguillon, par le Comte de Bonneau-Avenant, 2° ed. Paris, 1882, p. 340. 'I was thinking, for we poets do think in the oddest fashion, what you would do if, in your present disposition you thought the Duke of Buckingham was coming here, and whether he or Father Vincent would be in disgrace.'

²⁰ S. 1. January 8, 1649.

²¹ S. 1. 1649. ²² Ibid.

 ²³ Jules Loiseleur, Problèmes historiques; Mazarin a-t-il épousé Anne d'Autriche? Gabrielle d'Estrées est-elle morte empoisonnée? 1867, in-12; Victor Molinier, Notice sur cette question historique: Anne d'Autriche et Mazarin étaient-ils secrètement mariés? Paris, 1887, in-8°.
 ²⁴ Robineau, ms., pp. 10, 107.

The Queen's heart was captivated by another passion; love of the theatre. Not a single dramatic performance was given before the Court at which she was not present; she took the King to them and also Mazarin and any person whom she wished to please. Even during her year of mourning, after the King's death, she continued to attend the play, but concealed herself so that her presence might remain unknown.

Peter Colombet, the parish priest of Saint-Germainl'Auxerrois, loudly complained that the Oueen of France had approved by her presence of a play that had been prohibited, and had done so in his own parish, at the Palais Royal: in his eyes, stage plays of any description were unlawful. He wrote a letter to the Queen in which he stated his views : Anne of Austria's conscience was troubled and she consulted a number of bishops, who replied to the effect that whether a play was lawful or unlawful depended on whether the pieces acted were decent or indecent, and with this she was content. Some time later, Colombet, scandalised by the play-bill of a troupe of Italian actors, procured a statement signed by seven doctors of the Sorbonne, that it is forbidden under pain of sin to be present at a play, and that princes are bound in conscience to expel actors from their dominions: he then brought the document to Saint Vincent and requested him to present it to the Queen who received it at Val-de-Grâce. On her return to the Louvre. she questioned de Beaumont, the King's tutor, who replied : ' Play-acting is permitted, and nothing can be more easily proved.' 'Nevertheless,' she went on, 'learned and devout theologians think otherwise; read this statement.' Abbé de Beaumont, surprised at the sight of so many signatures, advised her to submit the whole question to the Sorbonne; the faculty of divinity decided that if good morals are not offended, theatrical representations are permissible, and the Queen was quite content.

As her mind was now at rest, she made no change in her habits and continued to frequent the theatre. The incident was made use of by some malevolent individuals to insinuate in the Queen's mind that Saint Vincent had acted out of jealousy. The motive, they said, of his siding with the parish priest of Saint-Germain was opposition to Mazarin who had authorised play-acting, but Anne of Austria paid no attention to these lies.²⁵

Saint Vincent was quite well aware of the fact that there can be good plays, but he also knew that it is easy, in this form of amusement, to transgress the bounds of decency and that several pieces played before the Court had provoked thoroughly well-earned criticisms. When he put the Queen on her guard against this dangerous form of pleasure, he had no other motive in view, and as a matter of fact, his warning bore fruit.

During the Carnival of 1647, the players surpassed all their previous efforts by the magnificent scenery they employed when acting a tragi-comedy called Orpheus. The little King, then nine years of age, opened his eyes wide; he thought he was in fairyland. The play was a musical one, sung in Italian, but unfortunately it bored all the spectators; the wits remarked that Morpheus would have been a better title than Orpheus. Mazarin was humiliated and resolved to make good this failure. 'He made up his mind to prepare a spectacle for the next Carnival which would be, if possible, still more dazzling to the eyes of the spectators but which would, in addition, charm their ears and minds : a French play, half-spoken, half-sung, in which the stage-machinery of Orpheus would be utilised and its inventor placed at the poet's disposal.'26 The poet's name was Pierre Corneille; he sought inspiration for his play in Ovid's Metamorphoses and called the piece Andromède. Towards the end of the year, after the play had been completed, Louis XIV was attacked by smallpox and everyone trembled for his life. Saint Vincent may have suggested to the Queen that, with a view to the child's cure, she should make a sacrifice by abstaining for some time from those theatrical performances to which she was so

²⁵ Mémoires de Nicholas Goulas, published in Collection de la Société de l'Histoire de France, par Charles Constant, p. 202; Mémoires de Madame de Motteville, ed. Riaux, Vol. I, pp. 302-304.

²⁶ Pierre Corneille, par Auguste Dorchain, Revue Hebdomadaire, No. 28, July 14, 1917, p. 216.

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL AT COURT 85

much attached. At any rate, Conrard wrote to a friend on December 20: 'Since the King's recovery, M. Vincent has inspired the Queen with disgust for these spectacles so that they have ceased entirely.'²⁷ Anne of Austria kept her good resolution during 1648, but in 1649 returned to her favourite amusement. Saint Vincent, kept far from the Court by circumstances and by Mazarin's hostility, was no longer at her side to sustain her fervour.

He might have retired from Court proud of what he had done, for, after he had left the Council of Conscience to which after Louis XIII's death he was appointed owing to the Queen Regent's confidence in him, the Church of France was regenerated and had recovered its pristine youth.

²⁷ Lettres familières de M. Conrard à M. Féibien, Paris, 1681, in-12, p. 110.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE COUNCIL OF CONSCIENCE

HE Council of Conscience was formed to deal with all the ecclesiastical affairs of the Kingdom. Its first members included Saint Vincent de Paul, Cardinal Mazarin, the Prince de Condé, Augustine Potier, Bishop of Beauvais and Philip Cospeau, Bishop of Lisieux.¹ Subsequent additions to the Council were Francis de la Fayette, Bishop of Limoges, Chancellor Séguier, James Charton, Canon Penitentiary of Paris, Hugues de Lionne, Secretary of State, Fathers Dinet and Annat, and some others.

A number of these dignitaries did not remain members for long, as Mazarin was of a fickle nature. Cospeau was dismissed on account of his attachment to the House of Vendôme; Francis de la Fayette, when his relative, Madame de Seneçy, lost the royal favour; Augustine Potier because his ideas were very frequently contrary to those of the First Minister.²

Saint Vincent accepted his nomination to the Council with the greatest repugnance; as soon as he heard the news, his first idea was to fly far from Paris. He begged the Queen to dispense with his services, and time and again repeated his request, alleging his incapacity and many occupations.³ It was, however, all in vain; Anne of Austria could not be moved and he had to obey.

¹ Journal de des Lions, p. 82; Journal d'Olivier Lefèvre d'Ormesson, éd. Cheruel, Paris, 1860, 2 vols, in 4to, Vol. I, p. 59.

p. 59. ² Goulas, *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 18; Collet, op, cit., Vol. I, p. 365.

³ Robineau, op. cit., pp. 15, 115; Abelly, op. *lit.*, Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 442; Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 210. It has been stated that he presided over the Council,⁴ but that is not correct; Mazarin, naturally enough, was chairman. Nevertheless, Saint Vincent occupied a prominent position; it was he who received the *placets*, made enquiries, studied the relevant documents, and presented reports to the meetings. He was in fact the fly-wheel of the Assembly.

Amongst the duties of the Council was that of selecting bishops and abbots, and, in a general way, granting benefices at the disposal of the King.

Meetings were held at the Palais-Royal or wherever the Court chanced to be when absent from the capital, as, for instance, at Fontainebleau or Saint-Germain-en-Laye. There was no fixed day for the meetings; Mazarin decided that.⁵

The official reports extant cover only the years 1644, 1645 and 1652, and their brevity is heart-breaking. There is not the slightest trace of a discussion, merely a dry mention of a recommendation made to the Queen in this form : 'The Congregation of Ecclesiastical Affairs is of opinion that the Queen may grant the Abbey of — to —, vacant by the death of —.'⁶

There is a separate volume ⁷ containing copies of letters of nomination to benefices, signed *Mazarini*, with the exception of the latest, at the bottom of which the name of Father Annat occurs; these extend from February 29, 1644, to November 28, 1654, and are equally short: 'The Queen, on the advice of the Congregation established by Her Majesty for ecclesiastical affairs, had granted to — the Abbey of —, vacant by the death of —.'

When Saint Vincent went to Court, he did not trouble to wear a new cassock ; he was content with his own 'good

⁴ Motteville, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 167; Recueil de plusieurs pièces pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal, p. 170. Abelly was aware of the fact that Mazarin presided over the meetings. (Op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. III, p. 445.)

⁵ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. III, p. 445.

⁶ Arch. du Minist. des Affaires Etran., France, Mémoires et Documents, Vol. 849–852.

7 Ibid., Vol. 853.

manners which were both simple and humble,'8 and accompanied by a high sense of what is fitting. On one occasion when he appeared, probably without noticing the fact, with a 'ravelled' girdle, Mazarin took it in his hands and showing it to the courtiers, said with a laugh : 'Look how M. Vincent comes dressed to Court and what a beautiful girdle he wears.'9 He was indifferent to the marks of deference that were shown him. A man's character is often changed when he attains a prominent position, but his remained the same. 'M. Vincent is always M. Vincent,' a bishop remarked, and nothing was truer.¹⁰

On the first occasion when he was present at the Council, the Prince of Condé courteously invited him to take a seat beside the other nobles. 'It is already too great an honour,' he replied, 'for Your Highness to tolerate my presence, I who am the son of a swineherd.'-' Moribus et vita nobilitatur homo,' said the Prince, ' it is not to-day that we are aware of your merit.' A discussion subsequently arose on various controverted points in theology and Canon Law, and Saint Vincent's contributions to the debate were carefully noted. 'Well, well, M. Vincent,' Condé remarked, 'you tell everybody and you preach everywhere that you are an ignorant man and yet you settle the most difficult questions with two words. Her Majesty could not have chosen a more enlightened councillor to deal with ecclesiastical affairs.'11

If praise and manifestations of profound respect had fostered a feeling of pride in Saint Vincent, it would have been counterbalanced by the by no means respectful and occasionally rude and insolent remarks addressed to him from time to time by courtiers regarding the simplicity of his dress, his modesty, and above all, his firmness in refusing to sacrifice the rights of justice and of religion to the interests of individuals. He was even at times subjected to illmannered practical jokes. On one occasion, when he was returning from Saint-Denis mounted on a white horse, the

⁸ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 210; ibid., Ch. XVIII, p. 273.

⁹ Ibid., Ch. XVIII, p. 274.

¹⁰ Ibid., Ch. XXI, p. 310. ¹¹ Ibid., Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 210.

Prince de Condé, the Count de Gramont, M. de Châtillon and some young noblemen, set off after him in pursuit, pistols in hand and firing in his direction to increase his fears. 'You will see,' they said to each other, ' that when the danger is over he will go into a church to thank God for having preserved him from bandits.' It was a shrewd guess, for, after a cross-country race between his horse and theirs, Vincent de Paul, on reaching the suburbs of Paris, dismounted and knelt for a moment on the steps of the first religious edifice he met.¹²

When he joined the Council of Conscience, he made up his mind to deal only with ecclesiastical affairs and such as concerned the relief of the poor, and to leave all others aside, even though they 'seemed to be matters of piety and charity.'¹³

His vigilance and energy preserved the Church of France from great evils and would have produced greater results if all questions dealing with ecclesiastical affairs had been submitted to the consideration of the Council, and if all its recommendations had become royal commands, but the Saint's good intentions were frequently frustrated by the First Minister. Mazarin and Saint Vincent were pursuing different and often contrary objects; the former regarded the end and not the means. In Mazarin's eyes justice and Canon Law counted for nothing, save in so far as they might be utilised to serve his designs; Saint Vincent was firmly convinced that ecclesiastical legislation, and still more the moral law, should take precedence of political interests and should in no circumstances be sacrificed to the latter. Such men were not made to understand one another. Mazarin was accustomed to set down day by day in small note-books his impressions of those about him, and they clearly reveal how deeply he distrusted Saint Vincent and his circle. We shall give a few extracts :

'M. Vincent wishes to advance Father Gondi.'

'M. Vincent has been approached, under pretext of affection for the Queen, and has been told that she is compromising her reputation by gallantry. It is also said

12 Antoine Durand, Journal, pp. 152-153.

¹³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 448.

that the Bishop of Beauvais has admonished the Queen on this subject.'

'Father Gondi has spoken against me, and also Father Lambert and M. Vincent.'

'Not to hold a meeting of the Council of Conscience for some time.'

'M. de Noyers has arrived with great designs in his mind, and on pretext of giving Her Majesty an account of the buildings, has spoken of very important affairs. He alleges that he has on his side all Her Majesty's household, the Jesuits, the monasteries, the devout, and especially M. Vincent.'

'Father Lambert told Madame de Brienne that he was informed on the best authority that Her Majesty could no longer abide him.'

'Madame de Brienne and Madame de Liancourt have made mighty assaults on the Queen on behalf of the devout life.'

'M. Vincent, who belongs to the Maignelay, Dans and Lambert party, along with some others, is the canal through which everything reaches Her Majesty's ears.'

'Father Lambert is all for Arnauld and is a defender of Jansenius. Her Majesty has been warned not to let herself be taken by surprise.'

'Two people came to tell me that the monasteries, brothers, priests and devout men and women, under pretext of maintaining the Queen's devotion, are taking up all her time so that she may have none for business and that I may not be able to speak with her; they hope to achieve their ends by striking the last blow, when everything has been prepared, through Maignelay, Dans, the Prioress of Val-de-Grâce, and Father Vincent.'

'All the ladies are plotting together and Madame Maignelay has arranged to meet them at the town house of Hautefort and Senecy.'¹⁴

These notes are dated 1643 and sufficiently show that Mazarin would have been by no means displeased to isolate the Queen in order to prevent her from being

14 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XIII, pp. 136 and foll.

influenced by anybody but himself. We may guess that Saint Vincent, for his part, would have seen a breach between Anne of Austria and Mazarin without undue depression. When he did succeed, by gentleness and tenacity combined, in overcoming the opposition of his formidable adversary, the latter made no secret of his displeasure. On February 13, 1644, a courtier wrote to Münster : 'Father Vincent is about to fall from favour, and it is even asserted that he has been exiled to Troyes in Champagne for having wished to take too much upon himself in the Council of Conscience; Bellingan has contributed to the spread of this rumour because he said to the Queen the day before yesterday that he had just left Cardinal Mazarin and had never in his life seen him in worse humour; the Queen asked him the reason why and he told her that Cardinal Mazarin's conscience did not fit in with Father Vincent's.'15 This storm, however, blew over, for the same courtier wrote on March 12: ' Father Vincent is not so powerless as not to have been able to prevent the grant being made to M. de la Rochefoucauld's son, who was recommended by Cardinal Mazarin, by asking it for M. Olier, the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice.'16

Towards the end of 1644, there were fresh rumours of loss of favour which spread even as far as Rome. Father Codoing having mentioned the fact to Saint Vincent in a letter, the latter replied : 'It is true there are some indications that I shall not be tolerated any longer in this employment, but my sins are the cause that I am treated otherwise.'¹⁷ He would have been by no means displeased if he had fallen a victim to Mazarin's rancour, as may be seen from the veiled though sufficiently clear terms in which he frequently refers to the matter in letters to nuns of the Visitation Order.¹⁸. The Queen, however, would not let him go; the confidence she bestowed on Mazarin in

¹⁵ Arch. du Minist. des Aff. Etran., France, Mémoires et Documents, Vol. 849, fo. 68. D'Ormesson mentions in his *Journal* that the matter discussed was the nomination of the Abbé de la Rivière to the co-adjutorship of Narbonne, which was opposed by Saint Vincent de Paul.

- 17 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 500.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 64, 76.

¹⁶ Ibid., fo. 116.

political affairs was bestowed every bit as fully on Saint Vincent in all that affected the interests of religion; she felt that she needed both by her side. Mazarin, whose action was hampered by the presence of the Saint, was too clever not to find a way out of his difficulty by tricks and stratagems; meetings of the Council were held on a variety of pretexts at longer and longer intervals, and in the meantime he disposed as he pleased of the benefices.¹⁹

The civil war of the Fronde only served to increase his enmity towards Saint Vincent. As we know, the Court when forced to leave Paris, fled to the Castle of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. On January 14, 1649, the Saint, still bearing the marks of his journey, appeared before the Queen. His heart was moved with pity at the thought of the wretched plight of Paris and he said to Anne of Austria : ' Peace ! Peace ! give us peace,' adding, convinced as he was that Mazarin was the cause of the public calamities : 'Your Majesty, pray send him away for a while.' Then, moving from the Queen's apartments to those of her First Minister. he showed no hesitation in using the same language to the Cardinal : 'Your Eminence, sacrifice yourself, withdraw from the country to save France.' When he had accomplished his duty, he left Saint-Germain and made a visitation of the houses of his Congregation in the west of France.

On the Queen's return to Paris two months later, she felt the need of Saint Vincent's presence and sent word to him to return as soon as possible.²⁰ The Saint had already marked out an itinerary; he intended to go to the south of France and visit the houses at Saintes, Agen, La Rose and Cahors, but the Queen's command upset his plans. He set out for Paris, where his disciples had the pleasure of seeing him once more on June 13, 1649.

As a result of the Fronde, Mazarin's influence over the Queen became more and more powerful; Anne of Austria no longer felt able to withstand it, for, owing to the state of the Kingdom, she had greater need than ever of her First Minister, who profited by the fact to banish all the enemies of his political designs from Court. On June 8, 1650, Saint

¹⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. III, p. 445.

²⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 434.

Vincent wrote that he no longer went to Court unless he was summoned 'which happens very seldom and perhaps will never happen again,' he adds, 'because we have received orders to settle the affairs of the ecclesiastical congregation here.'²¹ In another letter, dated May 15, 1652, he says he has not seen the Queen for six or seven months.²²

In July, as the state of the country was going from bad to worse, he entered into relations with the Duc d'Orléans and the Prince de Condé in order to bring about a reconciliation between them and the Court, and he sent an account of what he had done to the Queen and Mazarin. The Princes stated that they would be satisfied if Mazarin were dismissed, and in all probability this concession was due to Saint Vincent's suggestion.²³ In the end, Mazarin triumphed over all his enemies. On September 11, the Saint wrote to the Cardinal at Saint-Denis to say that the whole of Paris desired the return of the King and Oueen and begged him to show mercy to the city.²⁴ No doubt, this letter displeased Mazarin, for a few days later the Saint was informed that he was no longer a member of the Council of Conscience.²⁵ The news was a source of profound satisfaction to Saint Vincent, who subsequently paid only an annual visit to the Court,²⁶ probably on New Year's Day or the Queen's birthday.

Anne of Austria did not forget Vincent de Paul; he always retained her esteem and confidence and she lost no opportunity of letting him see that this was so by appealing for the help of the Priests of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity and the Priests of the Tuesday Conferences, for missions and new foundations. She grieved at his death and continued, under his successor, to sustain and extend his works.

The years spent by Saint Vincent at the Council of Conscience proved fruitful; he neglected nothing that he could do to safeguard or restore dogma, morals and ecclesiastical discipline.

We shall say nothing here of the Jansenist controversies

²¹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 29.	²² Ibid., p. 384.
23 Ibid., p. 423.	²⁴ Ibid., p. 473.
²⁵ Ibid., p. 491.	²⁴ Ibid., p. 473. ²⁶ Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 130.

which, if the extent and complexity of the question is borne in mind, would require several chapters, and will content ourselves with a few words on the efforts made to oppose the spread of other heresies.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, a type of mystical Illuminism containing certain theological errors, began to spread in a few religious communities of women, owing to the influence of Superiors or Confessors who alleged that they had received heavenly revelations. The pride of the nuns induced them to accept these ideas all the more readily as they felt flattered at being led to perfection by extraordinary ways. As Saint Vincent was one of the enlightened ecclesiastics empowered to make canonical visitations, he helped to retard the propagation of the evil, which at a later period reappeared under the name of Quietism.²⁷

He was also called on to defend the Catholic faith against John Labadie, who was gifted with a seductive eloquence and the externals of a mystic, and had won the confidence of several bishops; he had acquired in a number of places, especially in convents of nuns, the reputation of a saint. He was driven from Amiens where he had taught a degradingly sensual mysticism, and was received by the Jansenists at Port-Royal ; then, after a brief sojourn with the Carmelite Fathers in a monastery close to his native place, he went to Montauban and asked to be admitted to the Protestant Church. He was not long content with simple Church membership; he desired to become a The Bishop of Montauban was disturbed at minister. the news and wrote to Saint Vincent, who begged the Queen to intervene, because, as he said in a letter, 'this man is of a seditious turn of mind, a mischief-maker and an inventor of new heresies' and if allowed to do as he pleased 'he would bring trouble on both Church and State the interests of which are so closely bound up with those of religion.²⁸ The new convert soon fell out with the Calvinists of

²⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. VIII, p. 466; Sect. IX, p. 467. (See Bremond, *Histoire Littéraire*, etc., Vol. XII, on this subject. T.)

98 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 471.



LOUIS XIV AS A CHILD

Montauban who drove him out in disgust; he then left France and continued to preach elsewhere and to recruit proselytes.

Saint Vincent opposed, as far as he was able, the illegal encroachments of Protestants. He placed before the Council of Conscience complaints sent to him by bishops, by the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, and by others, whenever he considered such complaints were justified. Whenever members of the Reformed churches held meetings or preached in places where the exercise of their religion was forbidden, or married Catholic girls after an alleged conversion, or purchased important offices from which they were excluded by royal edicts, or refused their servants liberty to approach the Sacraments or to attend Mass, or prevented children of mixed marriages from being brought up in the Catholic religion, he did not suffer such breaches of the laws of the Kingdom to go unpunished. A letter was sent from the King to the Governors of provinces commanding them to proceed against delinquents.²⁹ Before Saint Vincent submitted the protests that were sent to him to the Council of Conscience, he always made enquiries to ascertain if they were justified. As he was a wise, well-balanced and impartial man, he cherished no prejudices against those who thought differently from him in matters of religion; he was quite well aware, to use his own expression, 'that there is a great difference between being a Catholic and an honest man.'³⁰

The Church had other enemies besides Huguenots, namely, authors of bad books. The habit, acquired during the civil wars of the Fronde, of freely criticising both ecclesiastical and civil affairs, was bound to lead from words to writings. A multitude of libellous pamphlets appeared which showed no respect either for faith or morals. Saint Vincent called the attention of the Council of Conscience to this abuse, and at his request, bad books were searched for, seized and their printing and sale forbidden.³¹ He also secured the prohibition of any public representations

- ²⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. VI, p. 454.
- ³⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 447.
- ³¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. IX, p. 468.

of certain scandalous comedies that gravely offended Christian morality.³² Moreover, he waged war against any indecency in the public manifestations customary on popular holidays, such as the Carnival or patronal feasts, or even during certain religious ceremonies, such as Corpus Christi processions. At Aix, Marseilles and other places, on the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament, a troop of boys representing the seven deadly sins were accustomed to march through the streets with the religious procession. They acted their parts so thoroughly that their conduct assumed the proportion of a public scandal. This custom, frequently suppressed by the King's command, disappeared for a time, but only to crop up again.³³ Saint Vincent, informed in 1645, that the inhabitants of Aix had witnessed such scenes, begged the Count de Brienne to write to the Count d'Alais. to the Parlements and the city magistrates to put an end 'to these scandalous proceedings,' which 'offend God and all decent people.'³⁴ God was, in truth, doubly offended, for immorality went hand in hand with sacrilege; such conduct, far from honouring the Blessed Sacrament, did but dishonour and profane It.

When Paris was besieged in 1649, acts of profanation of another nature saddened the hearts of the faithful. Bands of soldiers who were scattered around the walls of the city entered churches at Limeil, Beaubourg, Férolles, Ville-Abbé, Antony and Châtillon-sur-Marne, seized the vestments, broke open the tabernacles, carried off the sacred vessels and sullied the holy places in a thousand different ways.

Anne of Austria was profoundly distressed at these sacrilegious acts: she demanded exact reports of what had occurred and urged the Company of the Blessed Sacrament to consider what steps should be taken to make

³² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. IX, p. 467.

⁸³ Joseph de Haitze, Esprit du cérémonial d'Aix en la célébration de la Fête-Dieu, 1708; Grégoire Gaspart, Explication des cérémonies de la Fête-Dieu d'Aix en Provence, Aix, 1777, in-12; Marchetty, Explication des usages et coustumes des Marseillais, 1683, p. 423; Réné de Voyer d'Argenson, Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrément, p. 95; Raoul Allier, La Compagnie du Très Saint-Sacrément de l'Autel à Marseille, Paris, in-8°, pp. 60, 316, 332.

³⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 527.

reparation for these outrages. The members of the Society undertook the duty of carrying out various penitential exercises and devotional practices; they also resolved to have a mission preached, after All Saints' Day, in all places that had been profaned. Saint Vincent was to provide Missionaries, and Father Lambert, who acted as his deputy, took part in the deliberations that were held to settle all details. Eight priests and two clerics were allotted to the mission at Antony, which was the largest of those to be given. As considerable expense was entailed, the Queen defraved part, and the rest was made up by the Company of the Blessed Sacrament. 35

Another form of profanation which Saint Vincent had to deplore was that of blasphemy of the holy name; this evil was all the greater inasmuch as such offences, despite royal edicts, were also left unpunished. The inertia of the public authorities aroused the anger of a certain Father Bernard who, on hearing an oath or a blasphemy uttered in public, felt a shiver run through his frame, fell on the guilty individual even in the middle of the street, and knocked him down. 'Is it not deplorable,' he used to say, ' that I alone, a poor priest, am left to see that the King's orders and the commandments of God are observed?'36 Saint Vincent urged the Oueen to renew the ancient edicts against blasphemy and suggested various remedies for their efficacious application.³⁷ His advice was taken, and on September 7, 1651, the King appeared before the Parlement to declare solemnly, in presence of the princes of the blood, the peers, the great officials of the Crown and the Presidents of the various chambers, that he was assuming the government of the State. When he had made this declaration, he read two edicts which were immediately registered by Parliament; one against duelling, and the other against blasphemy. Severe penalties were decreed against blasphemers; a fine and imprisonment for the first five offences, and in case of a renewed breach of the law, the culprit was

⁸⁵ D'Argenson, op. cit., pp. 106, and foll; Abelly, op. cit.,
Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. IX, p. 467.
⁸⁶ Faillon, Vie de M. Olier, Vol. II, Bk. VIII, p. 264.

³⁷ Abelly, op. cit., p. 468.

to be sentenced to be mutilated, to lose first the upper lip, then the lower and finally the tongue.

The Company of the Blessed Sacrament, the Venerable M. Olier, and the Marquis de Fénelon had united their efforts with those of Saint Vincent in the campaign against blasphemy. They also combined forces against the deplorable and absurd practice of duelling, then so prevalent in the higher ranks of society.

The branch of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament established at Poitiers seems to have been the first to make a move; the members, distressed by the number of duels which were decimating the nobility of Poitou, called the attention of their head-quarters at Paris to the matter.³⁸ The evil arose, not from any lack of legislation, but from the fact that the sanctions of the law were never applied. The Kings shut their eyes to the practice; during the reign of Henry IV, in six years alone, seven or eight thousand gentlemen had perished in single combat, and towards the end of 1608, more than seven thousand royal pardons were granted and registered in the Court of Chancery.³⁹ Richelieu's severity produced for a time a welcome reaction, but this was followed by a new era of indulgence, with consequences that may be imagined.⁴⁰ In the parish of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, seventeen persons lost their lives within one week.⁴¹

The prejudice in favour of the duel was so deeply rooted that it was difficult to obtain an act of contrition from noblemen even in their last moments; they showed more concern for their 'honour' than for their eternal salvation. De la Roque-Chamarant, Marshal of the Royal Camp, lay sighing and groaning on his death-bed; the priest who was attending him asked what was the cause : 'Alas ! replied the sick man, ' is a La Roque-Chamarant to die in his bed after having shown his courage on so many occasions?'42

The campaign against duelling, begun in 1646, was con-

⁸⁸ D'Argenson, op. cit., p. 99.
⁸⁹ Félibien, Histoire de la ville de Paris, 5 vols. folio, Paris, ^{1725,} Vol. II, p. 1279. ⁴⁰ Faillon, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, Bk. VII, p. 276. ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

98

ducted with such skill and energy that it proved successful. Amongst the clergy, the chief part was played by M. Olier and Saint Vincent, and amongst the nobility by the Marquis de Fénelon and Marshal Fabert. The Company of the Blessed Sacrament also signalised itself by its energetic efforts for reform.

One of the first steps was a written engagement, signed by all the Marshals of France, never again to fight a duel. This declaration was widely disseminated all over France and was signed by large numbers of the gentlemen of Paris and the provinces.43

Preachers thundered against duellists; confessors interrogated their penitents, and exacted an oral promise not to fight a duel in the future ; the ecclesiastical authorities made duelling a reserved sin, and Holy Communion and Christian burial were refused to all who had not received absolution from this sin. 44

On Whit Sunday, 1651, the members met in the chapel of the seminary of Saint-Sulpice for a moving ceremony. Olier presented the following formulary which was signed by each in turn : 'The undersigned solemnly and publicly protest and declare by this present document that they will refuse all manner of challenges to a duel and will never fight one, no matter for what cause soever, and will manifest in every possible way their detestation of duelling as being contrary to reason, to the welfare and laws of the State and incompatible with salvation and the Christian religion; without, however, renouncing the right to repulse in every legitimate manner any insults that may be offered them, in so far as they are bound to do so by their birth and profession; and they are also prepared, for their part, to enlighten in all good faith such as may think they have a ground of complaint against them and will likewise give no such ground to anyone whomsoever.'

This oath was very much discussed, especially at Court, and the sceptics said as usual : 'Oh ! we shall see.' They had not long to wait, for the Marquis de Fénelon was shortly afterwards challenged to fight a duel and refused to do so.

- ⁴³ D'Argenson, op. cit., p. 99.
 ⁴⁴ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. II, Bk. VII, pp. 259–260.

'The great Condé' publicly approved of the oath of the association and this earned him a complimentary Brief from the Sovereign Pontiff. The Saint-Sulpice formula was disseminated almost everywhere and was signed on all sides. Prince de Conti distributed numerous copies of it in Languedoc, and Alain de Solminihac in Querçy. 'The King asked the Marquis de Fénelon to present it himself to the nobles attached to the Court. The members of the Assembly of the Clergy held in 1651, and fifty doctors of the Sorbonne approved the measures adopted by the ecclesiastical authorities against duelling. The Estates of Brittany and of Languedoc deprived all gentlemen who had fought a duel of the right of taking part in their deliberations.⁴⁵

And yet M. Olier and Saint Vincent were not satisfied ; they petitioned the Queen to have duelling solemnly prohibited by an official act promulgated in circumstances calculated to impress the public mind. Anne of Austria consented, and the public edict was pronounced on the same occasion as that against blasphemy, on September 7, 1651, the day on which the King declared he had reached his majority, before the most eminent personages of the Court, the Magistracy and the Army. 'We swear and promise, on the faith and word of a King,' Louis XIV went on to say, 'not to exempt in future any person, for any cause and consideration whatsoever, from the rigour of the present edict; and should letters of pardon be submitted to our Sovereign Courts, we declare that no attention shall be paid to them, no matter what clause purporting to come from us or what other derogations be alleged in their sup-We most strictly forbid all princes and nobles to port. intercede with us on behalf of the guilty party on pain of incurring our displeasure. We protest that we shall not on the occasion of a marriage or birth of princes of our blood or for any other general or particular pretext whatsoever, knowingly tolerate the issue of any letters contrary to the present edict which we have resolved to swear solemnly and expressly shall be observed on the day of our approaching consecration and coronation in order to render a law so

⁴⁵ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. II, Bk. VII, pp. 261–263; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 619.

Christian, just and necessary all the more authentic and inviolable.' Louis XIV was faithful to his oath and no pardon was granted during his reign to those found guilty of duelling.

Saint Vincent, notwithstanding all this, turned his eyes towards Rome. After Louis XIV's solemn declaration he cherished a hope that the Holy Father also would, in his turn, publicly intervene. In order to induce the Pope to do so, on May 19, 1656, he sent to Fr. Jolly, the Superior of the house at Rome, a detailed account of the campaign undertaken in France for the past ten years against duelling and of the results that had been obtained. The document was accompanied by a letter in which the Saint set out in greater detail what he desired. 'All that now remains to be done to bring this good work to a conclusion,' he wrote, ' is that Our Holy Father the Pope may be pleased to crown it with his blessing by the Brief for which we petition. I am sending you a rough draft which has been so carefully drawn up that it is considered here that nothing in it can be altered without ruining the whole excellent design. Pray take the trouble of going into the matter thoroughly so as to furnish all the necessary information to a Cardinal who can and will point out the importance of this matter to His Holiness. His Lordship the Nuncio has given a similar commission and is sending a similar report to his agent. . . . You must defray the expenses yourself, and I beg you to do so. We will repay you whatever you may expend. You will please write an exact account to me of all that may happen.'46 For reasons unknown to us, probably because it was thought useless to renew former prohibitions still in vigour, Fr. Jolly's efforts proved fruitless. Rome did not speak until 1665, when the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, called on to give its decision on the most advanced opinions of the laxist school, condemned the following proposition : 'A gentleman challenged to fight a duel may accept it in order that he may not be regarded as a coward.'

Although Saint Vincent had not the happiness of seeing the Sovereign Pontiff respond to his appeal, yet he was able,

⁴⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 619.

VOL. III.—H

before his death, to observe the efficacy of the measures adopted by the civil authority, and this was to him a source of profound consolation. Relying on the piety of the Queen Regent and on the energy of the new King, he looked to the future with confidence. The success of this campaign was in great part due to the Saint, for, although he had not been the first to move, he assisted it by his remonstrances and wise counsels, by his solicitude and intervention.'⁴⁷ His presence at the Council of Conscience and his influence over Anne of Austria greatly contributed to the success of an enterprise which many, considering its difficulty, had decided was bound to prove a failure.

The collation of benefices was one of the chief matters with which he had to deal, and his activity in this field was of the utmost value. To avoid repetition we shall not say anything here about episcopal nominations, and shall deal only with other classes of benefices.

When the Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs was established it found itself confronted with a mass of abuses against which it was absolutely essential to wage pitiless war.

The responsibility for the state of affairs was almost entirely due to the Kings of France and their ministers. The preliminary deductions from the revenues of benefices which they made with the object of paying pensions to wounded soldiers and others whom they wished to recompense, or to members of the nobility whom they desired to attach to themselves, had brought about a state of confusion that proved to be a source of unending disputes and lawsuits. The bishops of Navarre were tributaries of the Archbishop of Tours, the bishop of Mende to the Knights of Malta. The bishopric of Luçon was encumbered with an

⁴⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. IX, p. 468. See also Vie de la Mère Gautron, Saumur, 1690, in-12, Bk. III, p. 508. Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, wrote on April 20, 1706 to Pope Clement XI: Patruus, Olerio charus, Vincentium familiarissime novit. Utroque autem propositum confirmante, ipse juvenis dux et auctor fuit ut multi secum viri, bello et genere clari, impium duelli furorem in Sancti Sulpitii seminario, solemni die Pentecostes, jurarent. Qua quidem tot fortium nobiliumque militum pollicitatione scripta, opus tam felicibus auspiciis inceptum, piissima regina, suadente Vincentio, amplecti ac fovere numquam destitit.

102

annual debt of four thousand four hundred livres, and the revenues of the bishopric of Pamiers also fell into the hands of others. The prelates, thus despoiled of what was normally their due, were compensated by the union of benefices, often situated outside the confines of their dioceses, to their episcopal sees. Yet this abuse was nothing in comparison with others, such as simony, pluralism, non-residence, the abuse of *commendam* by which noblemen, Huguenot gentlemen, foreigners and infants in the cradle were placed at the head of abbeys; the deplorable selection of benefice-holders chosen not for their moral or administrative qualities but solely by favouritism, the transmission of benefices in the same family, as if a benefice were an hereditary possession, and finally the abuse then known as 'in confidence.'

Children who held benefices were canonically bound at a certain age to choose between entering the ecclesiastical state or resigning their benefices. As a matter of fact, arrangements were made by which they were able to remain laymen without losing any of their ecclesiastical property; all that was needed was a contract in virtue of which the title of the holder of the benefice was transferred to a cleric who, on payment of a suitable sum, received the revenues of the benefice but bound himself to hand them over in full to the beneficiary; this was called 'enjoying the temporalities of a benefice in confidence.'

If abbots *in commendam* devoted a good deal of thought to the revenues of their abbeys, they far too easily forgot their duties; first, that of maintaining the abbey buildings, and second, that of providing suitable food and lodging for the resident monks. All that they needed to do to swell their receipts was to economise on expenses. The lead and slates of abbey churches were sold and the roofs replaced with tiles; abbey buildings were allowed to fall into ruins; in order to have less mouths to feed, applicants for the Order were discouraged or their numbers were limited, and the amount of money allowed for the purchase of food for the monks cut down. Municipal councils, Courts of Justice and the Estates of the various provinces protested unceasingly, but it was waste of time to call attention to the clauses of foundation-contracts; the great beneficiaries, or at least their relations, proved too strong for local authorities, or even prevented them from protesting. Amongst those holders of benefices were Richelieu, Mazarin, Bourbon, Soissons, Conti, Lorraine, La Rochefoucauld and Sourdis; some were illegitimate children of kings or of members of the royal family; others held high positions in Court or in Parliament : others bore the glorious titles of princes, dukes. counts and presidents. In the hands of such powerful noblemen the law known as 'the law of devolution,' which had been passed for the purpose of repairing acts of negligence or for preventing acts of injustice, was utilised to attain a contrary object. If the ordinary collator of a benefice did not present within six months after the benefice had fallen vacant, or if the individual selected were notoriously unfitted or unworthy, it then became the duty of his immediate superior to remedy the evil by nominating. on his own authority, a person whom he considered worthy; in case the immediate Superior himself were in fault, then the right of collation passed step by step up to the most highly placed Superiors and might even reach the Pope. Now it frequently happened that Superiors, for no legitimate reason, prevented the collation of benefices within the prescribed period, with the result that those nominated either lost their benefices or, to avoid annovance and vexation, consented to pay an annual sum.

A further abuse was that of co-adjutor abbesses who were frequently appointed with the sole idea of retaining a benefice in the same family. An abbess who had obtained the right to a co-adjutorship for her niece might die happy, for the latter had now obtained a right of succession which she, in turn, would hand on to other members of the family. Merit, capacity, virtue, counted for nothing ; relationship alone determined the selection.

Scarcely had Saint Vincent joined the Council of Conscience than he began to seek for remedies for the evils that were constantly before his eyes. He presented a series of recommendations which were approved by his colleagues and adopted by the Queen.

1. No pension shall first be deducted from the revenues of episcopal sees except in favour of bishops who have resigned, after a long period of service and for a legitimate reason, such as sickness or old age.

2. Ecclesiastical goods and property shall be reserved to clerics and members of religious Orders of men and women. Laymen shall not receive any pensions from benefices; if they have a right to some recompense, as in the case of wounded and disabled soldiers, then their pensions shall be paid from other than ecclesiastical funds.

3. No benefice shall be granted until the nominee has reached a certain age; the age shall vary according to the nature of the benefice; eighteen years completed for abbeys, sixteen for priories and canonries of cathedral churches, and fourteen for collegiate churches.

4. Only priests ordained at least a year and a half shall be appointed to bishoprics.

5. A warrant or commission with a view to obtaining a benefice that has fallen vacant by 'lapse of right' shall not be granted unless the petitioner presents, with documentary evidence of the facts alleged, a certificate of capacity and of good life and morals.

6. No right to a co-adjutor shall be granted to an abbess, and no reservation for commendatory abbeys.

7. When an abbess asks for a particular nun to be appointed her co-adjutor, her petition shall not even be examined unless the rule is observed in that abbey and the nun recommended is at least twenty-three years of age, and has been professed for five years.⁴⁸

Every abbey had its own customs; in some, abbots were nominated by the King; in others they were elected by the monks either for life or for a period of three years. Any innovation in this matter would have only produced a crop of complaints and of lawsuits. Saint Vincent expressed no wish for a change; in his opinion, the rights of the King and of the monasteries should be respected, and he said so either to intriguing members of religious Orders, who relied more on the King's favour than on the votes of their brethren, and tried to pull strings at Court, or to prelates who, satisfied with the conduct of an abbess at the end of her three years of office, would have wished her to continue

⁴⁸ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. II, p. 444.

105

in the exercise of her functions until her death. As far as abbesses were concerned, although he believed that wherever elections for life had been established they should be maintained, he did not conceal his preferences for elections for a limited period of office. He had observed that women into whose hands power had been permanently placed, easily yielded to inclinations consonant with their natural defects of character.⁴⁹

In Saint Vincent's battle against these abuses he could have no better auxiliaries than persons who actually held benefices, such as bishops, superiors general, abbots or priors. Hence it was of the utmost importance to make a good selection, for that was the real remedy, though unfortunately one that could only slowly be applied, as, in order to employ it, he had to wait for the resignation or death of the titulars. Such a delay was painful to the Saint, and hence he begged those who were simply holders of benefices to delegate an exemplary religious, in favour of reform to govern the monastery.

He kept his list up to date of those who deserved to be recommended either for benefices or for pensions; first came the names of ecclesiastics attached to the household of the King, the Queen or the Army who were endowed with the requisite qualities and were not otherwise sufficiently provided for. He believed that such ecclesiastics had a right to preferential treatment.⁵⁰ The list was very carefully drawn up, not merely on the strength of testimonials submitted to him, but after long and careful personal enquiries.⁵¹

Saint Vincent's selections were solely inspired by the qualifications of the candidates and the needs of the monasteries; his choice was all the more meritorious inasmuch as it was usually the least fervent religious who proved to be the greatest intriguers and who went to Court with the intention of finding protectors even amongst the members of the royal family itself. Considerations of self-interest or of self-love were utterly unknown to our Saint; 'he

⁴⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. VIII, p. 464.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Ch. XIII, Sect. II, p. 446.

⁵¹ Ibid., Sect. VIII, p. 465.

paid no attention,' says Abelly, 52 ' to the power of those whom he refused; he did not trouble himself in the least about the insults or persecutions that such conduct might entail, but looked to God, whom alone he desired to please and whom alone he feared to displease.'58 He could excuse himself with so much graciousness, deference, respect and humility that on many occasions those whom he informed of the failure of their designs did not experience the slightest feeling of bitterness even when sorely disappointed.

There were, of course, some exceptions; a great nobleman, who had failed in his attempt, violently abused the Saint at the Louvre in presence of a large number of courtiers. The Oueen was informed and sent word to the nobleman to withdraw from Court : he would not have been seen there for many a long day if Saint Vincent himself had not interceded on the man's behalf. On another occasion, ' one of the most eminent magistrates of a sovereign court of the realm' chancing to meet the Saint in the street, asked a favour and met with a courteous refusal; he flew into a rage and received the admirable reply : 'Sir, you endeavour, as I think, to do your duty worthily, allow me to imitate you by doing mine.'54 A lady of high rank pestered him to grant a favour that could not honourably be bestowed. 'Madame,' he said, ' our rules and my conscience will not allow me to obey you in this; I very humbly beg you to excuse me.' Instead of excusing him, the lady indulged in a torrent of abusive and insulting remarks, to which Saint Vincent humbly submitted. 55 Another lady of rank, incensed because he would not yield to her repeated requests, left his presence saying : 'It is easily seen that you do not know how to treat ladies of quality; I have done you too much honour by addressing you. I know the Prince and will obtain from him what I cannot obtain from you.'56

A certain nobleman had made a habit of spending a

⁵² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. XI, p. 475.

⁵⁸ See also Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVI, Sect. I, p. 253.
⁵⁴ Abelly, op cit., Bk. III, Ch. XXII, p. 317.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. VII, p. 170.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. XXII, p. 317.

holiday with his family several times a year in a convent where his sister was abbess and his daughter a nun. He installed himself in the convent as if he were in his own home. thoroughly enjoyed himself at the expense of the abbey, and left whenever he felt inclined. When his sister, the Lady Abbess, died, he asked the vacancy for his daughter, as he then would have been able to behave as he had been accustomed to do. He paid a visit to Saint Vincent who listened to him patiently and then tried to point out how difficult it would be to satisfy his wishes, whereupon there was a regular storm of reproaches, insults and threats which did not for a moment ruffle the Saint's serene tranquillity. He let the storm blow over, and then repeated what he had already said : 'Your daughter is too young ; I am bound in conscience to prefer an experienced nun capable of governing others to your daughter.⁵⁵⁷

Not all parents proved so unreasonable. The Comtesse de Chavigny, on the death of her second son, asked that the two abbeys that had fallen vacant by the other's death, should be granted to her third child who was then five years of age. Saint Vincent refused, and the father, who was then Secretary of State, shortly afterwards showed him that not only did he bear no malice but that he thoroughly approved of his conduct. 'If you had behaved otherwise,' said Chavigny to Saint Vincent, 'you would have forfeited my esteem, and I would not have accepted your gift.'⁵⁸

A letter of Saint Vincent's to the Marquis des Portes will help us to appreciate the marvellous art which he employed to show petitioners how difficult it would be for him to fulfil their wishes. The Marquis had asked for a pension that was granted only to ecclesiastics who wore clerical dress, hence it was impossible to give it to him unless he complied with the prescribed conditions. Saint Vincent took great care not to offend the Marquis by a categorical refusal, but rather chose to prepare him gently for the disappointment that awaited him. 'The letter you have done me the honour of writing to me,' ⁵⁹ he says, ' is worthy

⁵⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. VIII, p. 454.

⁵⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 534.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 400.

of a really Christian soul such as yours. I cannot express, Sir, how edified I still feel at your ideas and sentiments on church government by prelates, and at your attitude in regard to the pension for which I shall render you all the services I possibly can. The good use you intend to make of it imposes on me a double obligation. And yet, I foresee two difficulties in this matter. The first is that an ecclesiastical pension is granted only to those who are actually ecclesiastics. wear clerical dress, and live, indeed, in conformity with it. I know, Sir, you have the ecclesiastical spirit and that this constitutes no difficulty in your case. But there is a second difficulty and one very much to be feared : namely, the fact that the Oueen and His Eminence the Cardinal are so overwhelmed with petitioners of all sorts that they have no freedom to take into consideration those who are most deserving. Pensions as well as benefices are being wrested from them, and they are prevented from disposing as they would wish both of one and the other. I shall not fail. Sir. to speak to them about you at a time and in a manner known to God. It is true your name is too illustrious and vour merits too well known to need to be extolled, and perhaps Her Majesty's and His Eminence's esteem for you may constrain them to satisfy you sooner than I dare venture to hope.' It is quite possible that when the Marquis had finished reading this letter, he thought that Saint Vincent would support his claim, and yet the latter makes no promise whatever; he simply conceals a polite refusal under a series of compliments that no doubt flattered the nobleman.

The salutary influence exercised by Saint Vincent was not confined to the choice of holders of benefices nominated by the King. Abbots elected by their communities, before entering on their duties, needed royal confirmation of their election, and this was not given indiscriminately; if a decision was reached that an election had been irregular or the person chosen notoriously unfitted for the office, the religious received orders to proceed to a new election.

A member of a religious Order, who had not accepted the reform, was placed at the head of a great abbey on which several houses depended ; he had used fraud to secure the appointment, for two of the electors were notified too late, and only arrived the day after the election was over. Saint Vincent could not endure the sight of such an abbot enjoying the fruits of such a dishonest manœuvre. He requested the bishop of the diocese to come to Paris and inform the Queen of the facts, and he also obtained from the two religious an official protest that was laid before Parliament. The bishop was ill and unable to travel, but he forwarded a letter containing a list of the irregularities that invalidated the election. The new Abbot, powerfully supported by persons of the highest rank, was energetically intriguing to maintain his position. He succeeded with the Parliament which rejected the protest of the opposition party. All seemed lost, but Saint Vincent once more begged and implored the bishop not to recoil from a journey that might put an end to so great an evil.

We are ignorant of the issue of this affair but what we do know enables us to see how zealously he pursued the reform of the monasteries and brushed aside obstacles that met him on the way.⁶⁰

Just as Saint Vincent proved impervious to feelings of self-love when duty was at stake, so did he despise the advantages that might have accrued to himself from his high functions. His disinterestedness was complete. He never asked a benefice for himself; he never favoured his relations, the members of his Congregation, or even, with one solitary exception, ⁶¹ laymen such as lawyers or procurators who were brought into relations with Saint-Lazare in the exercise of their duties. He never once rendered a service to others on condition of receiving a personal advantage; he never sought for any compensation whatsoever for the plunder of Saint-Lazare and some of its dependent farms, although the pillage was organised by bands

60 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. VII, p. 457.

⁶¹ This exception was in favour of M. Sevin, the lawyer in charge of the affairs of Saint-Lazare, whose brother became Bishop of Sarlat. The choice was a happy one, and was dictated by the personal qualities of the man and also by Alain de Solminihac's recommendation.

of Frondeurs who meant to punish him for his attachment to the royal family.⁶²

On more than one occasion, proposals were made to him which other men would have gladly accepted. One of the chief magistrates of the Kingdom, 63 who was anxious to obtain a rich abbey for one of his sons, offered, in exchange, to obtain for the house of Saint-Lazare the restitution of its ecclesiastical rights and revenues which it had recently lost. 'Other communities,' he remarked to the Missionary whom he asked to convey the proposal to the Saint, ' take advantage of the King's favour, when they can ; why does not M. Vincent imitate them?' The person proposed had not the necessary qualifications for the coveted appointment; Saint Vincent knew it and therefore replied: 'I know my duty; even if I were offered all the wealth of the world, I would remain faithful to it. The Congregation has nothing to fear from poverty; I should very much more fear an abundance of this world's goods.'64

The Governor of an important city, in which there was a house of the Company that was being attacked in Parliament, promised to lend them his support in return for a certain favour. 'I will assist you,' wrote Saint Vincent in reply,⁶⁵ 'if I can, but as far as this business of the Priests of the Mission is concerned, I beg you to leave them in the hands of God and of justice. I would far rather that they were not in your city than see them there by the favour and authority of men.'

On one occasion when asked to support before the Council certain proposals, quite reasonable in themselves but onerous on the clergy, he rejected the 100,000 livres

⁶² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. IV, p. 448; Sect. XI, pp. 472-475; Bk. III, Ch. XVIII, pp. 277-278; Robineau, op. cit., p. 59.

⁶³ This was, possibly, Mathew Molé, whose son Francis became Abbot of Sainte Croix, Bordeaux, in 1646 and of Saint Paul, Verdun, in 1652, after the death of Edward Molé, Bishop of Bayeux.

⁸⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVIII, p. 278.

⁶⁵ Collet, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 235; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XVII, p. 262.

III

offered for his services with the words : 'God guard me from taking this money; I would rather die.'⁶⁶

Those who knew the man merely shrugged their shoulders when a rumour was spread through Paris by a vile calumniator that he had promised a benefice in exchange for a library and a sum of 600 livres. When Saint Vincent first heard the rumour, he was upset; he took up his pen to write a protest but on further thought, laid it down. 'O miserable man,' he said to himself, 'what are you doing? You wish to justify yourself; and here is a slave in Tunis,⁶⁷ accused of a crime of which he is innocent, who died crucified without ever uttering a word of complaint. Oh, no, I will not defend myself.'⁶⁸

If, on many occasions, he suggested that diocesan seminaries directed by his priests and insufficiently endowed should be united to benefices offered by the holders of the benefices or their lawful collators,⁶⁹ this was no indication of any lack of disinterestedness, for by doing so, he was simply carrying out the views of the Council of Trent which had recommended this means of defraying expenses incurred in the education of the clergy.

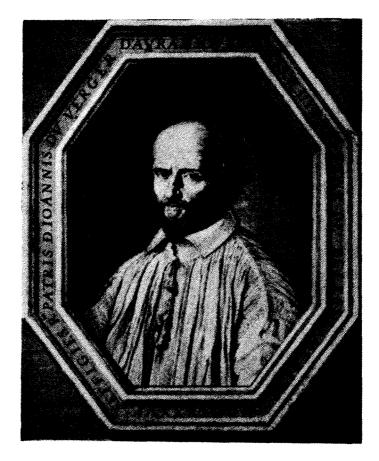
The Council of Trent was his guide in questions of faith as well as on matters of discipline, and it was in being faithful to the Council's teachings that he defended the Church against the errors of the Jansenists.

66 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. XI, p. 474.

67 Antoine de la Paix.

68 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 211; Robineau, op. cit., p. 9.

⁶⁹ Abelly. op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XIII, Sect. XI, p. 474.



THE ABBÉ SAINT-CYRAN

CHAPTER XLIX

THE ABBÉ DE SAINT-CYRAN

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL said to his Missionaries one day : 'All my life long I have been afraid that I should live to see the rise of a new heresy. I have seen the dreadful ravages caused by those of Luther and Calvin and the multitude of people of all conditions in life who have imbibed their pernicious poisons simply because they wished to have a sip of the false doctrines of their alleged reform. I have always been afraid of finding myself enmeshed in the errors of some new doctrine before I noticed it ; yes, I have been afraid of this all my life.'¹

The Saint was, as a matter of fact, exposed to the danger he had dreaded. Circumstances brought him into relations with a learned and attractive innovator who, masking his opinions under the veils of a profound piety and an ardent zeal for the purity of evangelical doctrine, succeeded in winning his confidence and gaining his friendship. This friendship was maintained by bonds so powerful that Saint Vincent on more than one occasion had to implore divine protection for grace to resist, lest he might glide down an incline on to which many great minds had allowed themselves to be drawn.

The friend who exercised such an empire over his heart was known by the name of M. de Saint-Cyran. Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, the first apostle of Jansenism in France, was born at Bayonne in 1581. After a solid grounding in the classics at the college in that city, he proceeded to Louvain on the advice of his bishop, Bernard d'Eschaux, to study theology. Although he pursued his studies at the Jesuit College, he came under the influence of James Janson,

¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 37.

a disciple of Baius (Michel de Bay) and President of the College of Adrian VI.

He felt drawn to Paris and went there in 1604, pursuing his theological studies under the learned doctors of the Sorbonne.

In Paris he chanced to fall in with another young man, four years his junior, who united to a great love of work an active and penetrating mind; this was Cornelius Jansen (Jansenius). As they had similar tastes, they met frequently, and in the end formed a close friendship that was only dissolved by death. They moved from Paris to Bayonne, studied together, and interchanged views and opinions on the great mysteries of divine grace and predestination. Bernard d'Eschaux wished to attach them to himself; he provided one with a canonry and placed the other at the head of a college, but as the Bishop was shortly afterwards appointed to the archdiocese of Toulouse, the friends' plans were upset. Jansen returned to Louvain, whilst du Vergier de Hauranne, after a short sojourn in Paris. went to reside at Poitiers, where, in 1620, he was granted the Abbey of Saint-Cyran, from which he takes his name.

He left Poitiers in the following year and took up his residence definitely in Paris. His frequent visits to Cardinal de Bérulle were bound to bring him into touch, sooner or later, with his compatriot, M. Vincent. The misfortunes of one of his nephews, who was a prisoner in Spain, hastened the meeting. The founder of the Oratory, consulted on the means of securing the young man's release, remembered that M. de Fargis, the French Ambassador at Madrid, was a brother-in-law of Madame de Gondi's, and that it would be easy to induce that lady to take an interest in the prisoner through the chaplain of the General of the Galleys.² De Bérulle accordingly invited M. Vincent and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran to meet at his house ;³ this was the origin of

² Journaux of M. des Lions, Dean of Senlis, p. 75; (the Ms. is to be found in the Bibl. Nat. fr. 24,999. Ms. 24,998 is only a copy).

³ Défense de feu M. Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier supérieur général de la Congrégation de la Mission contre les faux discours du livre

114

the relations established between the two men, relations that rapidly developed into those of friendship.

They lived on such terms of close intimacy as to share a common purse,⁴ and Saint Vincent frequently had his meals with Saint-Cyran.⁵ He even interested himself in the latter's former valet, who had become a sub-deacon, and warmly recommended him to Francis Fouquet, Bishop of Bayonne, who, after the young man had been educated and trained by Bourdoise, raised him to the priesthood and presented him with one of the best cures in his diocese.⁶ This affection was based on a real esteem. Later in life, Saint Vincent used to relate how he had been ravished, elevated and inflamed by the discourses of Saint-Cyran.⁷ He also showed great confidence in the Abbé and had recourse to him in his doubts.⁸

Saint-Cyran responded like a friend to the services rendered him by Vincent de Paul. He extricated the Saint's family from an embarrassing situation;⁹ assisted him in the difficulties that were encountered in the acquisition of the Collège des Bons Enfants,¹⁰ and in obtaining the Bulls authorising the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission;¹¹ he even proposed to send his nephew, de Barcos,¹² to Rome in connection with the matter.

de sa vie, publiée par M. Abelly, ancien évêque de Rodez, et contre les impostures de quelques autres écrits sur ce sujet (by M. de Barcos), s.l., 1668, p. 10.

⁴ Saint Vincent to Pallu. (See Restrictus probationum circa zelum Servi Dei contra errores Sancyrani et Jansenii, Romae, 1727, p. 10.)

⁵ Interrogatory of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, Question i. The gist of this interrogatory, in so far as it is concerned with the relations of Saint Vincent and M. de Saint-Cyran, may be found in *Saint Vincent de Paul*, Vol. XIII, pp. 93 and foll.

⁶ Lancelot, Mémoires touchant la vie de M. de Saint-Cyran, Cologne, 1738, Vol. II, p. 191.

⁷ Des Lions, op. cit., p. 70.

⁸ Interrogatory of Saint-Cyran, pp. 39, 40.

⁹ Barcos, op. cit., p. 13.

10 Ibid., p. 11.

¹² Lettres chrétiennes et spirituelles de Messire Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran, qui n'ont point encore été imprimées jusqu'à présent, par J.-N. Balin, s. l., 1744, 2 vols. in-12, letter to M. Arnauld, vol. II, p. 553.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 13.

When the Canons of Saint Victor brought a lawsuit in regard to the donation of Saint-Lazare, he succeeded in changing the mind of the Advocate General, Bignon, who had hitherto favoured the monks, and he also favourably disposed the First President, Le Jay.¹³ He offered the priory of Bonneville to the Saint, who, it is true, refused it on the advice of André Duval.¹⁴ Two Priests of the Mission gave a mission on the lands of his abbey at his request.¹⁵

As long as 'Monsieur Vincent' resided at the Collège des Bons Enfants (1625-1632), the two friends frequently interchanged visits, and when Saint-Cyran was forced to leave his rooms in the Cloisters of Notre-Dame, his first idea was to ask Saint Vincent to give him hospitality during the winter months. The presence of a stranger in the College would have entailed certain drawbacks, and as the Saint succeeded in making the Abbé realise this fact, the latter took up his residence with M. de Marcheville, close to the Carthusian monastery.¹⁶

After Saint Vincent had taken possession of Saint-Lazare, they did not meet so frequently, though he still accepted invitations to dine with Saint-Cyran from time to time,¹⁷ but from 1634 or 1635 onwards 'there was not much communication or close intercourse between them.' The cause may be guessed; it was neither the distance,¹⁸ for Saint-Lazare was at the very gates of Paris, nor press of business, 19 for that did not prevent Saint Vincent from seeing his other friends, nor fear of displeasing persons hostile to the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, for the Saint's virtue rendered him superior to fears of that nature. We must seek elsewhere for the real reason of the cooling off of their friendship.

No matter how willingly Saint Vincent listened to the advice of Saint-Cryan, he never followed it slavishly; at

¹³ Barcos, op. cit., p. 11; Interrog., q. 111.

14 Interrog., q. 38, q. 117.

¹⁴ Interrog., q. 30, q. 477 ¹⁵ Ibid., q. 115; Barcos, op. cit., p. 19. ¹⁷ Ibid., q. 4.

18 This is the motive alleged by Barcos, Réplique à l'écrit que M. Abelly, ancien évêque de Rodez, a publié pour défendre son livre de la vie de M. Vincent, s. l., 1669, p. 41.

19 Saint-Cyran, in his reply to question 90, attributes Saint Vincent's change of attitude to this cause.

116

times he preferred that of Duval or other doctors of the Sorbonne,²⁰ and hence there arose a certain amount of coolness on the part of Saint-Cyran. Moreover, the latter was very far from approving of the organisation of the Congregation of the Mission; if he had had his way, there would have been no concordat signed when Saint-Lazare was taken over;²¹ again, the members of the Company would have been united solely by the fervour of their own free will and not by the bond of vows;²² and priests would not be sent on missions until some years after they had been ordained.²³ It seemed to him that Missionaries too easily absolved from sin, that they did not show themselves sufficiently prudent when hearing confessions, or discreet enough in the pulpit when dealing with certain delicate topics.²⁴

Saint Vincent, for his part, was deeply distressed to see his old friend growing more and more obstinate in maintaining opinions contrary to the Faith and the recognised customs of the Church. He could not listen without a protest to the Abbé's strange remarks about the Council of Trent and the Catholic Church.

One day, in the course of conversation, a point of doctrine taught by Calvin was referred to. 'Calvin was right about that,' said the Abbé. 'You forget,' said Saint Vincent, 'that this proposition has been condemned by the Church.' 'I am quite well aware of it,' replied Saint-Cyran, 'but that only proves that Calvin made a mistake ; he defended his position badly ; that's all ; *bene sensit, male locutus est.*'²⁵

Remarks such as these were bound to hurt the lively and sensitive faith of a soul such as Vincent's. He was far more deeply pained on another occasion when he heard his friend remark : 'God has at length grown weary of the sins of all these countries; He is angered and intends to deprive us

²⁰ Interrog., q. 117.

²¹ Ibid., q. 108 and q. 109. ²³ Interrog., q. 116. ²⁴ Ibid., q. 115. ²⁴ Ibid., q. 115.

²⁵ Abelly, op. cit., 1st ed. Vol. II, Ch. XII, p. 104; Des Lions, op. cit., p. 71; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 319; Vol. VIII, p. 335.

VOL. III.---I

of the Faith of which we have rendered ourselves so unworthy. If anyone should wish to oppose the designs of God, and to defend the Church, which He has resolved to destroy, he would be a rash man, and hence it is my intention to labour for its destruction.' 'Alas, Gentlemen,' added Saint Vincent after quoting this remark, 'perhaps that man spoke the truth when he said that God, for our sins, would take away the Church from us, but that heresiarch lied when he said that it would be rash to oppose God in this matter and to devote oneself to the defence and preservation of His Church; for God tells us to defend her and we must do so. There is nothing rash in practising fasting, self-denial and prayer that the wrath of God may be appeased, and in fighting to the bitter end for the defence and maintenance of the Church.'²⁶

The Church, in Saint-Cyran's eves, was no longer what she had been : the limpid stream of the early ages had been polluted for the last five centuries. 'Two of the upholders of these opinions,' wrote Saint Vincent to one of his confrères, 27 ' told Mother Saint Mary of Paris . . . that there has been no Church for five hundred years. She told me so herself and wrote to me to that effect.' He was all the more ready to believe Mother Saint Mary as the Abbé de Saint-Cyran had made the same remark in his own presence. One morning, after he had celebrated Mass at Notre-Dame, he called on his friend. 'Confess, Sir,' said Saint Vincent, ' that you have just been writing down some of the thoughts and sentiments which God bestowed on you during your morning meditation. 'I do confess that God has given and gives me great lights,' replied the Abbé. 'He has revealed to me that the Church no longer exists. No, there is no longer a Church. God has shown me that there has been no Church for more than five or six hundred years. Before that, the Church was like a great river whose waters were limpid, but now what seems to us the Church is no longer anything but mud; the bed of that beautiful river is still the same, but its waters are not.' Saint Vincent, amazed at such language, interposed : 'But consider, Sir, are you

²⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 355.
²⁷ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 364.

prepared rather to rely on your own private views and opinions than on the word of Our Lord Jesus Christ who said that He would build His Church upon a rock and that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it? The Church is His spouse; He will never forsake her and the Holy Ghost will assist her for ever.' Saint-Cyran was far too much attached to his own ideas to pay much attention to the admonition of his holy friend. 'It is true,' he replied, ' that Jesus Christ built His Church upon a rock ; but there is a time to build up and a time to cast down. She was His spouse but now she is an adultress and a prostitute. Hence, He has repudiated her and it is His will to place another in her place who will be faithful to Him.' Saint Vincent could not endure it any longer. 'Is that, Sir,' he remarked, ' really the respect you owe the truth? Believe me, mistrust these false lights of your own spirit, for if you do not, you will wander away into the paths of error.'28

The Abbé de Saint-Cyran did not pay the slightest attention to these charitable suggestions; he was, as he rudely told the Saint one day, a far more enlightened man than Vincent de Paul. As the latter refused to accept Saint-Cyran's conception of the Church, the Abbé said : 'But, Sir, do you really know what the Church is?'-'The congregation of the faithful under our Holy Father the Pope,' was the reply. 'You know as much about it as you do about high Dutch,' said Saint-Cyran, in a sarcastic and contemptuous tone. The authority for this incident is Lancelot.²⁹ This conversation, he adds, led Saint-Cyran to compose a little treatise on the degrees of humility in order to point out the dangers to which those are exposed who are engaged in employments beyond their capacity. If we compare Saint Vincent's reply with Saint-Cyran's proud and insolent remark there is not much difficulty in arriving at a decision as to which of the two yielded more readily to a temptation to pride. It was certainly not the former.

Saint-Cyran was scarcely qualified to set up a school of humility. A really humble and modest man would not

²⁸ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, p. 411.

²⁹ Lancelot, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 301.

have said to Saint Vincent : 'If you had studied as I have, I would have shown you and would even have taught you how to work wonders,' or, 'If you are willing to listen to me, your Congregation will become one of the most illustrious in the Church';³⁰ nor would he have shouted in a fit of anger : 'You are a great ignoramus; I am astonished that your Congregation tolerates you at its head,' to which Vincent replied : 'I am still more surprised at the fact than you, for my ignorance is even greater than you imagine.'³¹

Saint-Cyran's views about the Church naturally induced him not to attach very much importance to Popes or Councils. Not only 'was he not inclined to submit to'the decisions of the Pope, but he did not even believe in Councils.' Saint Vincent declared, in a letter to the Bishop of Luçon, adding so that the prelate might believe his statement: 'I know it, My Lord, because I frequented his society for a long time.'32 On one occasion when Saint-Cyran was attacking the Council of Trent, Saint Vincent interposed and said : 'Sir, you are going too far. Do you really wish me to believe a single doctor of theology like yourself in preference to the whole Church which is the pillar of Truth? She teaches me one thing and you maintain the contrary. Oh, Sir, how can you prefer your own judgement to the best brains in the world and to all the prelates assembled at the Council of Trent who decided this point?' 'Don't talk to me about that Council,' said the Abbé, 'it was a council of the Pope and scholastics in which there was nothing but intrigues and cabals.' He paid but little attention to the decisions of councils, for he believed that he was especially enlightened by God. On another occasion, Saint Vincent paid the Abbé a visit; finding him utterly absorbed in reading the Bible, he waited for a few moments before speaking. Saint-Cyran was the first to break the silence : 'Monsieur Vincent,' he said, ' behold what I am reading; the Sacred Scriptures.' He then held forth at great length on the knowledge that God had given him of the sacred text, and finally added : 'The Holy Scriptures

³² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 178.

⁸⁰ Des Lions, op. cit., p. 71.

³¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 203.

are more luminous in my mind than they are in themselves.³³

Saint-Cyran's followers were of the opinion that confessors absolved from sins much too easily, but Saint Vincent tells us : 'M. Arnauld thinks that it is necessary to defer the absolution of all mortal sins until penance has first been done for them, and as a matter of fact, have not I myself seen this very thing done by M. de Saint-Cyran ? and is not the same practice still being carried out in regard to those persons who surrender themselves entirely to their guidance ? Nevertheless, this opinion is a manifest heresy.'³⁴

This Jansenist doctrine was by no means new. Peter d'Osma had already propagated it, and, together with a number of other propositions, it had been condemned by Pope Sixtus IV, on August 9, 1479, as heretical and scandalous. The Abbé de Saint-Cyran, however, was not the man to submit to the decisions of Rome.

He would not have indulged in such remarks before Vincent de Paul were it not that he cherished a secret hope of gaining the Saint to his party.³⁵ Saint-Cyran was double-tongued; he spoke one language to those whom he thought he could easily win, and another to those who would have rejected his novel views. 'I have heard the late M. de Saint-Cyran say,'³⁶ writes Saint Vincent, 'that if

³³ Abelly, op. cit., Vol. II, Ch. XII, p. 411.

34 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 365.

³⁵ Saint Vincent himself bears witness to the fact that this was what Saint-Cyran hoped for.

³⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 366; see also Des Lions, op. cit., p. 75; Francis Caulet also affirms that the Abbé de Saint-Cyran made no scruple of denying in public what he had stated in private. Raoul Allier (*La Cabale des dévots*, Paris, 1902, p. 165) finds it hard to believe that Saint-Cyran could have used the language attributed to him by Saint Vincent; he prefers to think that the latter had misunderstood the Abbé. 'Saint-Cyran,'he writes, 'realised so fully that his ideas were so contrary in their direction to current teaching, that in order to avoid summary condemnation and useless scandals, he opened his mind only to trusted friends capable of understanding him.' Hence, according to Allier, Saint Vincent simply misunderstood Saint-Cyran. But, on the other hand, Saint Vincent did actually in one room he had enounced truths to persons who were capable of taking them in, and if, passing to another room, he found there others who were not so, he would tell them the contrary, and that Our Lord had acted in this way and recommended others to do the same.'

After Saint-Cyran's death, Saint Vincent, despite his usual reserve, especially when the reputation of a third party was at stake, often related to his friends and the members of his immediate circle, his conversations with the Abbé. He was rightly convinced that a higher interest, namely, that of the Faith, demanded that the notorious heresies of the heads of the new sect should be made known to the general public. William Cornuel,³⁷ Priest of the Mission, wrote to Thomas Berthe, his confrère : 'M. Vincent told us at great length the whole story of Saint-Cyran, their close relationship, the warnings he had given him, the questions put to him even by Cardinal Richelieu himself on this matter and his refusal to appear before a lav judge to whom he would not have given any information on this subject.' In addition to this, we have the categorical and concordant testimonies of Des Lions. Archdeacon of Senlis, 38 Thomas Brévedent, a former Priest of the Mission, ³⁹ Pallu, Bishop of Heliopolis and Vicar Apostolic of Tonquin,⁴⁰ Jean des Marets,⁴¹ Nicolas de Monchy,

take part in the conversation, and from our knowledge of him, we are well aware that he was far more inclined to excuse than to accuse, to lessen rather than to exaggerate the gravity of reprehensible words or actions. It would seem that he is a better and more weighty authority than M. Allier, in this matter.

³⁷ Collet, La vie de Saint Vincent de Paul, Nancy, 1748, Vol. I, p. 266, note 1.

³⁸ Op. cit., pp. 70-78.

³⁹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, p. 334.

⁴⁰ Pallu's statement, signed and dated September 5, 1668, was submitted at the process of beatification of Saint Vincent de Paul. Pallu reports a conversation which he had with the Saint in 1660. We have only had an Italian translation of this statement to work from. (See *Restrictus*, p. 10.)

⁴¹ Quatrième partie de la Réponse aux insolentes apologies de Port-Royal contenant l'histoire et les dialogues présentés au roi, Paris, 1668, p. 217.

122

Priest of the Mission, ⁴² the Abbé de Pinsonnière, ⁴³ Mother Bollain, a Visitation nun, ⁴⁴ Francis Caulet, ⁴⁵ Abbot *in commendam* of the Abbey of Foix and subsequently Bishop of Pamiers, and many others. ⁴⁶

We may now see what value should be attached to Barcos' denial when he states that Abelly's accounts were ' unheard of calumnies . . . published on the testimony of Jesuits.'⁴⁷ Abelly had no need to consult Jesuits ; he could find in the copious memoranda placed at his disposal by the Priests of the Mission all that he has actually written on Saint-Cyran's singular opinions, and the truth of his documentary evidence was guaranteed by Saint Vincent's correspondence or copies of his conferences.

Furthermore, Saint Vincent was not the only person to whom Saint-Cyran had unfolded his scheme of reform;

⁴² An autograph statement submitted at the process of beatification and translated into Italian in the *Restrictus*, p. 12.

⁴³ An autograph letter dated April 14, 1705, submitted at the process of beatification and translated into Italian in the *Restrictus*, p. 12.

⁴⁴ Fondation du premier monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie de Paris, ms. written in 1740 from contemporary memoirs; cf. Rapin, Mémoires, cd. Léon Aubineau, Vol. I, p. 545.

⁴⁵ The official account of Caulet's deposition made before Lescot states : 'Father Vincent, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, to whom the said deponent declared certain maxims he had heard the said M. de Saint-Cyran utter, advised him (Caulet) not to see the Abbé in future ; which advice he followed and has not seen the said M. de Saint-Cyran since.' (François Pinthereau, Les reliques de Messire Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran, Louvain, 1646, p. 429.)

⁴⁶ Amongst other evidence that could be submitted are the depositions of Raymond Desmortiers, Francis le Fort, James Martine, Nicholas Boutillier, John Babeur, Charles le Blanc, Francis Columb, Anthony Durand and Claude de Rochechouard, who testified at the process of beatification and stated what Saint Vincent had said to them about Saint-Cyran; also an extract from a letter written by Francis de Bosquet, Bishop of Montpellier, dated March 13, 1665, and another from Raconis, Bishop of Lavaur, who wrote in 1645 that Saint Vincent had dissuaded him from taking as his co-adjutor Joly, a Parisian Canon, who had lodged with Saint-Cyran for four years. (Cf. *Restrictus*, pp. 2–6). But why proceed?

47 Barcos, op. cit., p. 20.

the Saint was quite well aware of the fact that Francis Caulet, John Jehaud, the Abbé de Prières and others had heard the Abbé make similar statements.

The scandal had now begun to assume such proportions that Saint Vincent thought it would be wise to intervene. In October, 1637, having heard that Saint-Cyran was about to leave for Poitou, he called to pay a visit, but principally to tell the Abbé that his conversation was producing deplorable results. From the profound differences existing between the primitive Church and that of his own day, the Abbé concluded that the latter was not the true Church : from this followed the necessity of reforming the Church, or, to use his own language, of destroying it. Saint Vincent endeavoured to make him see the falseness of this line of reasoning by reminding him that God Himself had varied the manner in which He dealt with both angels and men, that the law of Moses had succeeded to that of the law of Nature, that the Mosaic law had in its turn given way to that of the Gospel, and that the Apostles also had modified their practices.⁴⁸ After these general remarks on a doctrine of development that is to both orderly and mindful of fundamental identities, Saint Vincent took up one by one the chief errors of which Saint-Cyran was accused, mentioned four in particular, and as the Abbé seemed to be annoved by his warning, made his excuses and changed the conversation. When about to leave, he charitably offered Saint-Cyran the loan of a horse for his journey.⁴⁹ The Abbé did not defend his views, but contented himself with remarking that a full and complete reply would require prolonged explanations which he would supply on some other occa-He prepared his reply at Dissay (Vienne) at the sion. country house of the Bishop of Poitiers, 50 whose guest he This letter, dated November 20, 1637, despite its was. length, is much too important a document not to be inserted here.

48 Des Lions, op. cit., p. 72.

⁴⁹ Interrogatory, q. 26.

⁵⁰ Henri-Louis Chasteigner de la Rocheposay (1611-1651). We quote this letter from the text published by Francis Pinthereau, *op. cit.*, pp. 347 and foll. ' Šir,

Since the last occasion on which I had the honour of seeing you I have been ill the whole time, a full month, suffering, as I think, from the evil results entailed by attending a person who was dying and with whom I remained throughout the whole night.⁵¹ Not knowing how my illness might terminate (I endured it without taking to my bed), I have had divers thoughts, in case God were pleased to bring me to the eve of my death. And because I then had before my mind the last conversation which you had with me I thought I would let you know in writing that, by God's grace. I have not had on my heart any one of those matters which you came to my house to mention to me, and that I have others on my soul, of which you know nothing, 52 and on account of which I have reason to fear the judgements of God, but which are somewhat alleviated by the fact that I am accused of holding those Catholic truths that are regarded as lies and falsehoods by those who love glitter and splendour more than the light and truth of virtue.

'The humble disposition which you have at the bottom of your heart to believe what others can lead you to see in the sacred books sufficiently enables me to realise that there is nothing easier than to induce you to consent, on the evidence of your own eyes, to matters which you now regard as errors. But when I heard you, in the course of your fraternal admonition, say that you disapproved, thus adding a fifth admonition to the other four, namely, that I had formerly said to you in private that I wished to render you and your whole house a great service, I decided that it was not the time to defend myself and to enlighten you by reasonable and manifest proofs on those matters of which you disapproved even to the extent of rashly condemning them without having heard them. That was why I held myself in check, deeply agitated as I was and moved to speak and demonstrate the falsity of those matters with which you reproached me, so as rather to excuse you for having abandoned me when I was being persecuted, as if I were a criminal, than for any evil opinion you may have had of me.

⁵¹ Madame d'Andilly (cf. Interrog. q. 9).

⁵² His sins (cf. Interrog. q. 12).

'I easily endured this from a person who had long honoured me with his friendship, and who was regarded in Paris as a perfectly upright man, though this friendship could not be destroyed without wounding charity. The only emotion left in my soul is one of amazement that you who profess to be so gentle and so discreet in all circumstances have taken the occasion of an attack that is being made on me by a triple cabal,⁵³ and for reasons that are well known, to say things to me that you would never have formerly ventured to think; and that, although I might have expected sympathy from you, you have, on that account and against your own inclination and custom, taken it upon vourself with extraordinary boldness to unite with others to crush me; adding this, moreover, to the excesses of others, namely, that you took it on yourself to come and say this to me in my own house, a thing which none of the others have dared to do.'

Saint-Cyran then brings forward, in opposition to the charges laid against him, the flattering testimonies of De la Rocheposay, Bishop of Poitiers, Louise de Bourbon, Duchesse de Longueville and Cardinal de la Valette ; he then goes on to say that if he had an opportunity of putting his opinions before the prelates who frequent Saint-Lazare they all would give him their approval.

'As far as your own house 5^4 is concerned,' he proceeds, 'you thought you had acted wisely because you prevented me from doing it the good turn I had wished to render it. So far am I from being vexed thereby that I thank you most heartily for having relieved me of the trouble, without perhaps on that account having diminished God's good pleasure in my regard for the desire He had given me to serve you both in spiritual and temporal matters, all the more so as you are well aware that I did so without involving myself in the preliminary negotiations, by which you were established where you now are, negotiations in which

⁵³ Saint-Cyran here refers to the Abbé de Prières, Sebastian Zamet, Bishop of Langres and the Jesuits and some Oratorian Fathers (Cf. Interrog. q. 91.)

⁵⁴ Saint-Lazare.

I would not have wished, for anything in the world, to have had any act or part.⁵⁵ But that which more than anything else should enable vou to see how little attached I am to my own opinions and prepared to yield to my friends, against the judgement of my conscience, which would never suffer me to do such things. I have supported these friends in a public disputation in such a manner as to alter by my arguments and pleadings the opinion of him to whom you are so deeply indebted.⁵⁶ I bring this forward only from necessity and only on this occasion in order to remind you of my kindness, and to alter the opinion which others have given you of my harshness and severity. For I certainly venture to say that I so little deserve such a reputation, in the judgement of those who know me and know what is true, that if I mentioned the four or five charges of which you spoke to me to that personage and his colleague they would have laughed at them, and would thus have appeased, without saving a word, all the anger I experienced.

'I have, Sir, much reason to forgive you this and to say to you in my heart some of those things which the Son of God said to those who had ill-treated Him. I trust, and I say this with confidence, that this will not be one of the things which will make me blush before His judgement seat; on the contrary, I expect some favour from His mercy if I persist in maintaining and adoring in my heart that which the tradition of apostolic doctrine (by which we refute heretics and without which the Church cannot subsist) has taught me by the organ of the same Universal and Catholic Church for the last twenty-five or thirty vears.

'I beg you to be kind enough to allow me to tell you, as soon as I have been able after a painful illness into which I fell at Cléry, 57 and from which I am still suffering, what I have had upon my heart so that I might act towards you

55 Not that Saint-Cyran was opposed to Saint Vincent's removal to Saint-Lazare, but one of his principles was not to concern himself with the temporal affairs of others. (Cf. Interrog. q. 37 and 108.) ⁵⁶ Bignon, Advocate General. (Cf. Interrog. q. 111.)

⁵⁷ A small village in the department of Seine-et-Oise.

both as a friend and a Christian, and not leave the smallest drop of bitterness in the bottom of my heart that might diminish ever so slightly the friendship which I desire to maintain with you to the end of my life.

'Of this I have given proof, since I was so deeply hurt, by a letter I wrote to His Lordship, the Bishop of Poitiers, and I would have given you a still greater proof of it, if I had felt the approach of death, by submitting to you a number of things in your Institute which I think are reprehensible in order that I might let you see, at least after my death, the motives I had in offering you my services in that matter, services of which you had so little esteem that you took the simple proposal I made you on this matter as a proof of the four things of which you accused me.

'Provided that God does not accuse me of this. I am only too happy, and may He accept as His the charity with which I sought to induce you to abandon certain practices which I have always tolerated in your discipline, seeing how attached you are to it, and resolved to adhere to it all the more strongly as it was authorised by the advice of the great personages whom you consulted.⁵⁸ After that I was not so foolish as to tell you what I thought of these practices, namely that, in my opinion, they are not pleasing to God. For there is only one real, true simplicity in which they can be carried out, and that is rarer than the ordinary grace of Christians, and indeed so rare that I would dare venture to say of it what a blessed man in our own time⁵⁹ said of spiritual guides of this age, namely, that of the ten thousand who profess to be so, scarcely one can be selected who could render them excusable in the sight of God.

'Nevertheless, I will be as patient with you as God is in letting you go your own way, and I will be just as ready to be of service to you in the future as I have shown myself to be in the past, out of kindness, even if I cannot give my entire approval, putting aside the title of master for that of your very humble and very obedient servant.'

Saint Vincent did not answer this letter, but as soon as

⁵⁸ Saint-Cyran is referring here only to Duval, a celebrated doctor of the Sorbonne. (Cf. Interrog. q. 117.)

⁵⁹ Saint Francis de Sales. (Cf. Interrog. q. 119.)

he learned that Saint-Cyran had returned to Paris he called on him to make his excuses and to express his thanks.⁶⁰

Shortly afterwards Saint-Cyran was arrested and imprisoned in the Castle of Vincennes. Amongst the papers discovered at his lodgings was a copy of the letter written on November 20. If any man could explain this document, from which the authorities believed they could extract grave accusations against the prisoner, it was obviously 'Monsieur Vincent.' Martin de Laubardemont, Master of Requests, ⁶¹ who was entrusted with the duty of investigating the case, set down the Saint's name in the list of witnesses to be heard, although members of the clergy were forbidden by Canon Law to appear before lay judges to be examined on matters of fact or doctrines connected with religion.⁶² Vincent de Paul refused to appear before Laubardemont, and Richelieu accordingly sent for the Saint to be interrogated by himself. He interviewed Saint Vincent on two separate occasions, employed all the resources of his diplomatic skill to extract a single word that could serve as the basis of a definite charge, and, seeing that he had failed utterly, 'manifested his displeasure and, scratching his head, dismissed the Saint.'63

'Monsieur Vincent' was summoned to appear again, not before the Cardinal this time, but before James Lescot, who was ordered to take his deposition according to the juridical forms.⁶⁴ His evidence was given on March 31, April 1 and April 2 of the year 1639; he wrote out a summary of the deposition in his own hand, signed it, set down the customary flourish beneath his signature (to avoid

⁶⁰ Interrog., q. 34; Barcos, op. cit., p. 16.

⁶¹ Laubardemont's name is sometimes employed as a synonym for an iniquitous Judge. Saint Vincent had more than one reason for refusing to appear before him. (A *Maître des Requêtes* was a magistrate whose duty it was to place a considered exposition of a case before the Council of State. T.)

⁶² Evidence supplied by William Cornuel and Des Lions, op. cit., p. 73.

63 Barcos, op, cit., p. 20; Lancelot, op. cit., p. 12, note.

⁶⁴ Lescot examined at least eight other witnesses whose depositions have been published by Pinthereau, op. cit., pp. 347-353.

forgery) and then presented it to the judge; in this way he prevented any tendentious interpretation being given to his evidence in the official report. 65

In 1643 Lescot was consecrated Bishop of Chartres and took this document with him when he left Paris; it passed from the Bishop's palace to the archives of the record office, and afterwards fell into the hands of James Joachim Colbert, Bishop of Montpellier, who had it in his possession till his death (1738). After that no one knows what became of it. Six years later (1744) Collet sought for it in vain; when he wrote to Montpellier he was told it was in Paris, and the Jansenists in Paris referred him to Montpellier. 'At any rate,' he wrote, after knocking at several doors in vain, 66 'render us this service : let Saint Vincent's evidence be placed in the hands of someone who occupies a public position, and allow those to examine it who wish to take the trouble of doing so.'

Luckily, whilst the original lay in the record office at Chartres, a copy was made by an ecclesiastic of that diocese. Besson, parish priest of Magny (Seine-et-Oise), also made a copy which he lent to a scholar to read, even giving him permission to transcribe the text. The text of this manuscript is preserved in M. Gazier's library. The Mazarin library also possesses a copy which agrees with the other in all respects, as it is taken from a contemporary source.⁶⁷ The document was first published from the original text in

65 According to Rapin (Extrait des dix-huit tômes infolio sur l'affaire des jansénistes qui sont au Saint-Office à Rome, Bibliot. nat. fr. 10,574, fo. 119), Saint Vincent, regretting that he had refused to appear before Laubardemont, sent 'some letters he had received from Saint-Cyran' to Richelieu. 'I shall not quote them here,' he adds, 'because they have been already printed in the report of this case and because I have already given the substance of them in the charges brought against this abbé by Père Vincent and in the latter's dispute with him.' If we are to believe Rapin these letters and the Saint's deposition greatly contributed to Saint-Cyran's condemnation, but Rapin's account, which is full of inaccuracies, is obviously prejudiced.

66 Lettres critiques sur différents points d'histoire et de dogme adressées à l'auteur de la Réponse à la Bibliothèque janséniste, 1774, p. 15.

2481, fo. 287-291.

1730 by Colbert, Bishop of Montpellier,⁶⁸ and may be found in Lancelot's *Mémoires touchant la vie de M. de Saint-Cyran*,⁶⁹ in the *Life of Saint Vincent* by Maynard,⁷⁰ who mistakenly denies its authenticity, and in other works.

The following is the text of the document in full :

'I, Vincent Depaul, Superior of the Congregation of Priests of the Mission, fifty-nine years of age or thereabouts, after taking oath to speak the truth on my Holy Orders, testify that these are the facts and the replies I gave in presence of M. de Lescot, Doctor of Theology and Regius Professor of Divinity, deputed by His Grace the Most Eminent and Most Reverend John Francis de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, anent the proceedings now being taken against M. l'Abbé de Saint-Cyran, at present a prisoner in the Castle of the Wood of Vincennes, on account of certain private opinions contrary to the Church which he is accused of holding.

'I admit that the letter presented to me by the said Sieur de Lescot, which I have signed and to which I have added a flourish with my own hand, is the same letter that was written and sent to me by the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran, dated from Paris, November 20, 1637, signed with the name of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran and consisting of about four pages and a half.

'Furthermore, I stated that I had known the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran for fifteen years or thereabouts and that, during the said fifteen years, I have had a good deal of intercourse with him and considered him to be one of the best men I have ever known.

'That, towards the end of the year 1637, about the month of October, I paid a visit to the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran in his house at Paris opposite the Charterhouse and told him of the rumours that were current regarding him, namely, that people were saying that he maintained certain opinions and practices contrary to the practice of the

68 Troisième lettre de Mgr l'évêque de Montpellier à Mgr. l'évêque de Marseille en réponse à celle que ce prélat lui a écrit en date du 7 mars 1730.

⁶⁹ Vol. II, pp. 493–501. ⁷⁰ Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 517–524.

Church, the number of which I do not remember with the exception of one, which is that he was accustomed to make some persons do penance for three or four months before giving them absolution;

'That he received this warning quietly enough, and that I do not distinctly remember the reply he then made ; this incident took place between the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran and myself alone, and no one else was present ;

'That it seems to me the Abbé Olier, M. L'Abbé Caulet de Prières,⁷¹ told me that M. de Saint-Cyran observed the above-mentioned practice, and that they also told me a number of other things about him which I do not remember;

'That M. l'Abbé Caulet having told me that he had been in communication with M. l'Abbé Saint-Cyran, and that he had noticed that the latter held certain private opinions, and then having asked me, as I think, if he should accept spiritual guidance from him, I told the aforesaid Sieur Caulet that as he found some difficulty in accepting these said opinions, he need not submit to his spiritual guidance, and I do not know if I told him not to frequent his company.⁷²

'I do not know when I received the said letter nor by whom it was directed or delivered to me.

'He never told me what he had to find fault with in our Congregation, or what were the feelings referred to in his letter.

'I do not remember having ever forbidden the members of our Congregation to frequent the society of the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran.

' I do not know what he means when he speaks in the said letter of having found fault with the proceedings by which our Congregation was established where it now is, nor what is the public disputation which he says, in the aforesaid letter, had taken place, nor of his having brought about a change of opinion, by weight of argument, in a person to whom we are deeply obliged for our foundation, unless he means to refer to the lawsuit in which we were engaged

⁷¹ Jean Jehaud, secretary of the Abbey of Citeaux.

⁷² He had as a matter of fact done so.

with the monks of Saint-Victor and of the assistance which he then rendered.

'Neither do I know what is the persecution to which he says, in the same letter, that he was subjected, and in which he says I abandoned him, or what is the attack or the triple cabal which he says was formed against him.

'Neither do I know what is the act of kindness which he says he wished to render our Congregation and which I prevented him from doing, unless he means thereby that I was unwilling to follow his advice in respect to our Congregation. Now, he never gave me any advice regarding the spiritual guidance of the Company.

' I saw the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran in his said lodgings in Paris on one occasion since his return, when we did not discuss the contents of the letter, save that at first I told him I was grateful to him for having unburthened himself to me, meaning thereby that I was glad he had given vent in the said letter to his annoyance with me.

'I do not remember having told anyone that I had received the said letter and that I was keeping it, unless M. Dauzenat, who was then almoner to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and is now steward to my Lord Cardinal.

'I have kept the said letter in order to prove that I did not participate in the aforesaid practice of the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran nor in the opinions for which he is blamed, in case these were enquired into.

'As soon as M. de Laubardemont had spoken to me about the said letter, on behalf of my Lord Cardinal, or two days afterwards, I brought the said letter to His Eminence and informed the said Sieur Lescot, on the same day, that it was in my possession.

⁶ Neither M. Barcos nor M. Singlin⁷³ ever came to see me to beg me not to say anything against M. de Saint-Cyran.

'I have never called the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran my master.

'I do not know why the said letter was not closed, but I do remember that it was in an envelope of sealed paper and that there was no other letter enclosed with it.

⁷³ Anthony Singlin had left Saint Vincent to follow Saint-Cyran.

VOL. III.—K

'I learned three days ago from a certain M. Tardif that a copy of the said letter was found amongst the papers of the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran, which were seized on the occasion of the imprisonment of the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran, and that the said copy was in the handwriting of the Superioress of Poitiers, ⁷⁴ and I think he added that the original had been sent to me by the said Superioress; but I know nothing about that.

' I have never received any letter from the said Superioress regarding the opinions and practices imputed to the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran, nor even regarding the said letter, nor, indeed, on any other subject, except one or two which I received about four years ago concerning the establishment of the house of the Visitation at Poitiers, on behalf of which I requested the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran to write to His Lordship of Poitiers.

'And that is all I know in regard to the said letter.

'And as for those other points on which I have also been interrogated by the said Sieur Lescot, I say that in regard to the question whether I had ever heard the Sieur de Saint-Cyran say that God had destroyed His Church for the last five or six hundred years, quoting these words of Solomon : *Tempus destruendi*, and that corruption had glided into it, and even into its doctrines;

'I reply that I only once heard him utter the words that God is destroying His Church, and that, therefore, it would seem that those who sustain her are acting against His intention. He stated this, as it seems to me, after some remarks on the judgement of God on moral corruption. And at first this proposition pained me, but I have since thought that he intended it in the sense in which it is related that Pope Clement VIII used to say that he wept because he saw that, whilst the Church was extending to the Indies, it seemed to him that it was being destroyed at home. And as for what he said about those who sustain her acting against the wishes of God, I think that this should be explained by the actions of the life of the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran which were for the most part in support of the Church, as, for example, his writings, and what he has caused to be done for

⁷⁴ Mother Anne de Lage.

the salvation of souls. As for the remainder of this charge, I never heard him speak of the matter.

'To the question whether I had heard the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran remark that the Pope and the majority of bishops...do not constitute the true Church, as they have no vocation and are wanting in the spirit of grace;

'I reply that I never heard him say what is contained in the said question, unless on one occasion only when he said that many bishops had no vocation and were children of the Court. Nevertheless, I have never seen anyone who had a greater esteem for the episcopate than he, or for certain bishops, as, for example, the late Lord Bishop of Comminges.⁷⁵ He also held in high esteem the late Bishop of Geneva, Francis de Sales, and was accustomed to call him "blessed."

'Questioned as to whether I had heard him say that the Council of Trent had changed and altered the teaching of the Church, and that it was not a lawful Council;

'I reply that I never heard him say so, but I certainly did hear him say that there had been intrigues in the said Council.

'Interrogated as to whether I had not heard him say that it is an abuse to impart absolution immediately after Confession in accordance with the usual practice, and that satisfaction should be previously made;

'I reply that I never heard him say that it was an abuse to act in the manner stated in the question. I certainly did hear him speak of penance before absolution but I do not remember in what precise terms. But experience enables us to see in what sense he interpreted the content of the said question, because at his request we gave a mission in the parishes that depend on his Abbey of Saint-Cyran, and on many occasions he offered us a priory which he has near Poitiers so that we might do the same in that diocese, and everyone knows that we carry out the substance of what is expressed in this question.

'Questioned as to whether I had heard him say that the just should have no other law than the interior movement

⁷⁵ Bartholomew de Donnadieu de Griet, died November 12, 1635.

of grace, so as to live in the liberty of the children of God, and that vows are imperfect as opposed to this liberty of the spirit of God ;

'I reply that I never heard him utter the words that the just should have no other law than the interior movements of grace so as to live in the liberty of the children of God. I have a very confused recollection of having heard him speak on some occasions in praise of the interior movements of grace, and of his quoting the words of Saint Paul : *Justo lex non est posita*. But I do not remember the terms in which he spoke in favour of interior movements of grace nor in what context he alleged the words of Saint Paul. As for vows, I doubt if I heard him utter the aforesaid words in the question. Nevertheless, I do know that he assisted one of his own nephews to become a Capuchin in the province of Toulouse, and that he himself brought the son of one of his friends to the Reformed Carmelite Fathers.

'Questioned as to whether he had not said that Jesuits and other new religious Orders which intermeddle in clerical functions should be destroyed;

'I reply that I heard him censuring some opinions of the Jesuits especially in regard to grace, and I think I heard him say that if it was in his power to ruin Jesuits, or some one of them, he would do so. But I have also heard him praise in the highest terms the first members of their Order ; and I also think I heard him say that he wished no harm to the Society of the aforesaid Jesuits, and that he would give his life for it and for each one of its members, which leads me to believe that what he meant to say by "ruining the Jesuits" was that, if it depended on him, he would take away from them the power to teach theology ; and, as for the remainder of this question, I do not know what it means.

'In regard to several other points, such as whether perfect contrition is absolutely necessary for the Sacrament of Penance, whether sacramental absolution can be given only to those who are truly contrite, that absolution does not remit sin but only declares that it has been already remitted, namely, in virtue of the contrition that has preceded and should precede absolution, that venial sins are not sufficient matter for sacramental absolution ; that it is unnecessary

to confess the number of grave sins or the circumstances that alter the species of the sin; that true faith is not distinguished from charity; that the Church, for the last six centuries, is not the true Church; in regard to these points, I say, and also in regard to several others on which I have been interrogated by the said Sieur Lescot;

' I reply that I never heard the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran speak of them.

'That this is all I know about the said Sieur de Saint-Cyran.

'I have written out all the above with my own hand, and having re-read it, I still maintain it and sign it,

VINCENT DEPAUL.'

It has been the general opinion of Catholic writers that this document is apocryphal, and that it was written by some Jansenists in the eighteenth century. This is an error, and the error has undoubtedly arisen from the false idea that if Saint Vincent had given evidence before Lescot, he would have ruined the Abbé de Saint-Cyran. That is not the case, for Saint Vincent was not the man to compromise a former friend at the very moment when the latter was being threatened with the severest penalties. Moreover, he was far from thinking that penal enactments would be capable of extinguishing the nascent heresy; he may, perhaps, have even feared a contrary result. He himself told M. des Lions that in his written depositions he had taken two things into account; first, to say nothing contrary to the truth, and second, to say nothing that could injure the accused.⁷⁶

A clear proof that the Saint's evidence was favourable to Saint-Cyran is in the fact that it is not to be found amongst the eight depositions retained for the trial, and published by Father Pinthereau.⁷⁷ It would not have

⁷⁶ M. Vincent 'decided to write out his deposition with his own hand, taking, as he said, for his rule of truth, God and his friendship for Saint-Cyran, so that he might say all that he possibly could in the latter's justification.' (Des Lions, *op. cit.*, p. 75.)

⁹⁷ Les reliques de Messire Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, abbé de Saint-Cyran, Louvain, 1646, oct., pp. 347 and foll.

been suppressed if it had provided the prosecution with material.

The opening phrase : 'I, Vincent Depaul, fifty-nine years of age or thereabouts' confirms the authenticity of the document. Jansenists would certainly have written : 'I, Vincent Depaul, sixty-three years of age or thereabouts,' for everybody then believed that the Saint had been born on April 24, 1576, and the interval of time between 1576 and 1639 is sixty-three years. In the eighteenth century everyone was ignorant of the fact that Abelly, who on this point was followed by all biographers, had wrongly antedated the Saint's birth by five years. It would certainly have been a wonderful coincidence if the Jansenists, who were of the same opinion as Abelly, had spoken like Saint Vincent.

And yet if this document is compared with some of the Saint's letters and reported conversations it cannot but surprise us at first, for we find quite a different language in the latter. This discrepancy, however, is explained by the different object he had in view. In the first case, he wanted to save a man; in the second, to preserve the faithful from the errors which that man had propagated. In the first case the kindest interpretation was placed on Saint-Cyran's remarks; in the second, it was his duty to expose the danger, such as it actually was, without minimising it. Again, in the first case he was not obliged to say all that he knew; he might even pay no attention to what was known solely from private letters or from strictly private conversations.

Furthermore, even Abelly himself seems inclined to believe that when Saint Vincent appeared before Lescot he was still in doubt about the dispositions of the accused and the nature of his relations with Jansenius. 'M. Vincent,' he wrote, 'did not know to what to attribute the strange maxims with which M. de Saint-Cyran was accustomed to regale him on various occasions. His charity led him to regard the discourses of this abbé rather as the indiscreet outbursts of a mind that allowed itself too much liberty than as the schemes of a concerted heresy. ... But when, after the latter's death, M. Vincent saw Jansenius's book



JANSENIUS (CORNELIUS JANSEN)

appear and begin to create divisions in the schools, in religious communities and families; when he knew the pernicious dogmas maintained in this book, some of which were in complete agreement with what M. de Saint-Cyran had said to him in conversation, he then clearly perceived certain things of which he had previously been ignorant. . . . He then knew that all that M. de Saint-Cyran had said to him about the corrupt state of the Church, and against the Council of Trent and in favour of Calvin's doctrine was intended only to serve as a preparation for a favourable reception of the new dogmas. . . M. Vincent, on seeing these pernicious opinions spreading in all directions and beginning to infect portion of the Church, believed that he should do all in his power to oppose so great an evil : and as the name and reputation of M. de Saint-Cyran were being utilised to authorise them with the public he decided that he should no longer keep silence.'78

The Abbé de Saint-Cyran appeared before Lescot on May 14, 1639, and the following days. The letter sent from Dissay to Saint Vincent constituted the principal basis of the accusation brought against him. The Judge was particularly curious to know what was meant by the phrase : 'When I heard you, in the course of your fraternal admonition . . . adding a fifth correction to the other four, namely, that I had formerly said to you in private that I wished to render you and your whole house a great service, I decided that it was not the time to defend myself and to enlighten you . . . on those matters of which you disapproved even to the extent of rashly condemning them without having heard them.'

When Saint-Cyran was questioned on these four 'admonitions' he refused to say what they were. He had understood, he stated, that his teaching on the imprudence of deferring penance until the hour of death was blamed, as also some of his advice regarding the direction of the Congregation of the Mission; the other points, of less

⁷⁸ La vraye défense des sentiments du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul... touchant quelques opinions de feu M. l'abbé de Saint-Cyran, Paris, 1668, quarto, p. 16. importance, had escaped his memory. Lescot treated this reply with scepticism, and one can scarcely be surprised at his having done so.

Saint Vincent had been a little more definite in his deposition : he had reproached his friend for waiting sometimes for two or three months before giving absolution so as to allow time for the penance enjoined by the confessor to be performed. As for the other points, he stated that he would deal with them subsequently. Now later on we find a number of erroneous propositions attributed to Saint-Cyran: that God had destroyed His Church for the last five or six hundred years, that the Council of Trent had altered Catholic doctrine and was not a lawful Council. that vows interfere with perfection; that the Pope and the majority of the bishops do not constitute the true Church, and that the just should have no other law than the interior movements of grace so as to live in the liberty of the children of God. etc. It would then seem that three of these errors. perhaps the first three, should be added to the preceding one if we are to have a complete list of those which had so greatly disturbed the Abbé de Saint-Cyran when they were reported to him by Saint Vincent.

When Saint-Cyran was in prison he had permission to write to his friends and disciples, and he availed himself of it. Antoine Arnauld received several letters from the Abbé, and in reply to one he wrote the following on September 15, 1641, from the Collège des Bons-Enfants where he was making a retreat in preparation for ordination :

'I cannot express to you the feeling God has again given me of the grace which He granted me by providing me with that faithful counsellor for whom so many seek in vain for they meet only with false advisers who insinuate themselves and by a strange blindness or a secret presumption think themselves capable of guiding souls without knowing the first rule of how to do so. What I have seen here has led to this outburst, although as a matter of fact I honour those who are here and have not the slightest reason, as far as I am personally concerned, to be displeased with them ; but I cannot nourish myself on unsubstantial food after having tasted solid viands, and here I experience the truth of those words of Wisdom: Qui addit scientiam addit dolorem, for whatever knowledge I may have of the truth leads me to suffer with impatience many things admired by others. The person who visits me has only just gone out; he is a courteous man, not wanting in intelligence. We converse on the most general topics. I have arranged with him that I am to be allowed to read the New Testament instead of the subjects for meditation which he wished to give me.'

The methods observed at the Bons-Enfants were not likely to appeal to a man of Antoine Arnauld's individualist character, and Saint-Cyran can scarcely have been surprised at the fact.

The imprisonment of Saint-Cyran was the personal work of Richelieu; as soon as the Cardinal was dead, Louis XIII allowed the prisoner to communicate with the outside world. A few days later, on February 16, 1643, he gave orders that the Abbé was to be set at liberty. Saint-Cyran, however, did not long enjoy the royal pardon, for he died of an apoplectic stroke on October 11, 1643.

Saint Vincent, instead of abandoning his old friend when he was in difficulties, had thought it his duty to come to his assistance. He was deeply pained when he heard of the Abbé's imprisonment, and on several occasions visited Saint-Cyran's nephew; he exhorted the latter to patience and resignation, quoting the words of Holy Writ: Date locum irae. His conduct towards the uncle was such as is inspired by the sincerest friendship; he advised him, before the enquiry was held, to dictate his replies to an official notary lest their meaning might be distorted. As soon as his approaching release was announced, he hastened to pay him a visit, at which he encouraged and congratulated 'Pray earnestly for two priests, perhaps the only him. priests in the Church of God,' said the prisoner, without going into further details. During the short stay that Saint-Cyran made at Port-Royal after his release, he was visited by Saint Vincent on several occasions. He returned on the day of the Abbé's death, sprinkled the corpse with holy water and sympathised with de Barcos who replied : ' Oh ! what a loss ! the Sacred Scriptures were more luminous in him than they are in themselves.' Shortly afterwards, at

the Council of Conscience, Saint Vincent asked and obtained the Abbey of Saint-Cyran for de Barcos, and was anxious that he himself should be the first to announce the news.⁷⁹

We should not be surprised by Saint Vincent's conduct throughout this whole affair. His charity was universal; it was not solely confined to Catholics who were firmly attached to the faith of the Church, but extended to all, and especially to those who by their past services had a right to his gratitude. Furthermore, he knew that the best means to win heretics or infidels is not to avoid them or to hurt their feelings by acts of discourtesy but rather to touch their hearts.

It is said that Saint Vincent was present at Saint-Cyran's funeral, but such was not the case. An ambiguous passage in Barcos' Défense, interpreted contrary to the author's meaning, gave rise to this idea. Barcos, speaking of Saint Vincent, wrote : 'He followed the charitable example of several persons of rank and of their Lordships the prelates who did him (Saint-Cyran) the honour of assisting at his funeral when His Lordship the Bishop of Amiens⁸⁰ celebrated Holy Mass and solemnly officiated in the Church of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, in presence of several other bishops and archbishops and of the late Queen of Poland and other princesses. M. Vincent was one of the first to go and pay the last duties to the departed in his lodgings when he sprinkled him with holy water.' The⁸¹ first sentence may be understood to mean that Saint Vincent was present at Saint-Cyran's funeral, and was so interpreted by Abelly, who stated, in reply, that the testimony of Barcos did not suffice to make the fact certain.⁸² This statement is clear enough, but it was misinterpreted by Barcos who, thinking that Abelly had stated that Saint Vincent was actually

⁷⁹ Barcos, op. cit., p. 29. Observe how Lancelot attributes to de Chavigny's intervention with the Queen the choice of Barcos for the abbey of Saint-Cyran, and to d'Andilly the despatch of the commission of appointment. He never mentions Saint Vincent (*Mémoires*, pp. 266–267). We think that Barcos himself was, in this matter, better informed than Lancelot.

⁸⁰ Francis Lefèvre de Caumartin. ⁸¹ P. 28.

⁸² La vraye défense des sentiments, etc. Paris, 1668, p. 11.

present at the funeral, replied : 'Whilst he suppresses many notable actions performed by M. Vincent in honour of the late M. de Saint-Cyran, he has added of his own accord one which was never mentioned and which, as a matter of fact, is not true; for he thinks that M. Vincent was present at the burial⁸³ of M. de Saint-Cyran.'⁸⁴

If Barcos⁸⁵ never intended to say that Saint Vincent was present, yet he undoubtedly expressed himself in such a way that many Jansenists actually believed it.⁸⁶

As we have seen, Saint Vincent acted towards Saint-Cyran with justice and prudence. No one was better fitted than he to restrain the unfortunate man from the brink of the abyss into which he was falling, or to withdraw him from his errors. But God has His own designs which we are bound to revere and adore, even when we do not comprehend them.

⁸³ Barcos places these words in italics.

84 Réplique, p. 48.

⁸⁵ Collet believes that Barcos thought so (*Lettres critiques*, pp. 13-14). If this was really Barcos' conviction he would certainly have said so in his *Défense* at page either 9 or 10.

⁸⁶ See Lancelot, op. cit., p. 259, note; Collet, op. cit., p. 40; Legros, Réponse à la Bibliothèque Janséniste, p. 87; Bougaud, Histoire de sainte Chantal, Paris, 1863, 2 vols., oct., Vol. II, p. 636.

(On the relations between Saint Vincent and Saint-Cyran see Bremond, Histoire Littéraire, Vol. IV, Ch. III, pp. 36-83. T.)

CHAPTER L

THE HISTORY OF JANSEN'S AUGUSTINUS

WW ITH the death of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran the second founder of Jansenism disappeared, for the Bishop of Ypres himself had died on May 6, 1638. The death of the two leaders did not retard the progress of the new heresy, for their ideas survived in their writings and were propagated by their disciples.

The best known of these books is the Augustinus which was published at Louvain in 1640, at Paris in 1641 and at Rouen in 1643. Jansenius attacked the problems that were then so passionately debated in the schools : original sin, liberty, grace and predestination, and supplied solutions which in his eyes accorded best with the teachings of Saint Augustine.

The Jesuits at Louvain were not slow to discover traces of Baianism and Calvinism in Jansen's solutions which they publicly denounced. Their criticisms were answered and their own doctrines counter-attacked by some of the professors of theology at Louvain. Echoes of these discussions were prolonged to a great distance and Paris was soon mingled in the fray.

It was not without uneasiness that Rome saw these theological disputes extending and everywhere causing divisions and trouble. Even before this, Gregory XIII and Urban VIII, to avoid similar inconveniences, had forbidden anyone to publish a disquisition on grace who had not been authorised to do so by the Holy Office. Accordingly, both Jansen and the Jesuits of Louvain were at fault, and on August 1, 1641, the Holy office forbade their works to be read.

Confronted with the opposition of the University of Louvain, Urban VIII intervened in person, first by a Brief (January 11, 1642) and next by the Bull *In eminenti* in which he confirmed the decree of the Holy Office and signalled out, in the *Augustinus*, certain errors of Baius (Michael le Bay) that had already been condemned. Passions, however, had now been so fully aroused that not even the words of a Pope, though solemnly enunciated in a Bull, proved able to appease men's minds and to unite their hearts. The Pontifical document was criticised, declared to have been obtained by misrepresentations and false statements, and to be replete with errors, contradictions and interpolations. If the Jesuits, it was stated, were not its authors, there was no doubt whatever that they had altered its terms. Two doctors of divinity left Louvain for Rome to have light thrown on the subject and had their illusions dispelled in the Eternal City.

Whilst this was going on, Urban VIII died. His successor, Innocent X, requested the Governor and the Bishops of the Low Countries to have the provisions of the Bull *In eminenti* carried out.

In France the Augustinus had its friends and enemies. Amongst the defenders, Saint-Cyran, Barcos, Anthony Arnauld and Toussaint Desmares, the Oratorian, were conspicuous from the first. In the opposite camp were Isaac Habert, Canon Theologian of Paris and subsequently Bishop of Vabres, a monk of the Order of Saint Bernard named Peter of Saint Joseph, and two Jesuits remarkable for their learning, Fathers Sirmond and Petau. The Jansenists had the joy of winning over to their party Octave de Bellegarde, Archbishop of Sens, who wrote in favour of the new doctrines in 1643.

But the book that won greatest favour with the public was entitled On Frequent Communion (1643) and was written by Antoine Arnauld, the great theologian of the party. The circumstances that led to its publication are not wanting in interest.

The Marquise de Sablé, a penitent of the Jesuit Father de Sesmaisons, was accustomed to mingle piety and worldliness. She used to go to Holy Communion at least once a month, and she might be seen in the morning at the Holy Table and in the evening at a ball. Her friend, the Princesse de Guémené, a penitent of Saint-Cyran, frequently reproached her for profaning the sacraments, with the result that warm and lively discussions ensued. The ladies very naturally consulted their spiritual guides, who supplied them with weapons of attack and defence. M. de Saint-Cyran composed a little treatise for the Princess who gave it to the Marquise, who, in turn, handed it on to Father Sesmaisons. The Jesuit replied with another little treatise, which, moving in the contrary direction, at length arrived at M. de Saint-Cyran.

The Abbé, filled with indignation at the lax morality of the Jesuits, was preparing to refute their errors when death carried him off. Arnauld took it on himself to reply for Saint-Cyran, and did so brilliantly. His book, On Frequent Communion, was well written and provided with a liberal supply of documentary evidence; it bore the approbation of fifteen French bishops and of twenty doctors of the Sorbonne. The work proved to be an amazing success; the first edition was sold out in a few days; within six months it was followed by a second, and then by third and fourth editions.

Arnauld, in this book, set out to discover what are the necessary dispositions, according to the Fathers, the Councils, Tradition and the theologians of the Church, for receiving Holy Communion worthily. In his eyes, the Eucharist is a food and not a medicine; a testimony of our love of God and not a means of attaining His love. If we find that we have but little devotion, fervour, interest in heavenly things, and but little feeling of the divine, if we have allowed ourselves to commit a few acts of impatience, then we are not in a fit state to receive the Sacrament and should absent ourselves from the Holy Table.¹ As for weekly Communion, Saint Bonaventure considers that it should be 'the prize and recompense of the most perfect virtue that can be discovered';² and Saint Francis de Sales allows it only to those who combine an aversion from all sin, even venial, with a great desire to receive the Sacrament.³ Another rule of Saint Bonaventure is suggested for priests : not to

¹ 5th ed., Paris, A. Vitré, 1644, in-4to, pp. 202, 257–268, 662. ² P. 179 ³ P. 101.

say Mass too frequently or too seldom ; no priest, no matter how fervent, is exempt from certain imperfections or certain weaknesses which will occasionally prevent him from saying Mass.⁴

The one thing which Arnauld seems most bitterly to deplore in the non-observance of these ancient practices of the Church is the abandonment of the custom, still observed in the twelfth century, of not allowing penitent sinners to receive absolution or Holy Communion until after they had done penance for several months. ' The Church,' he says,⁵ ' has always cherished in her heart a desire that sinners should do penance according to the holy rules of all the Fathers, and it is an abuse of her indulgence in these later days to condemn as rash those who, wishing to satisfy God, desire to follow the universal order observed by the Church during so many centuries and one which she has never retracted by any decree or canon.' Abstention from Holy Communion is in itself an act of penance, and even 'the most important part' of penance; hence it is salutary, and there is nothing better calculated to prepare the faithful for a worthy reception of the Sacrament.⁶ Nay more, if a person, deeply moved with regret at his sins, feels inclined to prolong this penance for the whole of his life, we should regard such a sentiment as praiseworthy, and the effect of a quite particular grace of God, but not one that should be followed, in order to avoid singularity, ' and to avert the judgement of those who cannot understand how a penitent soul can remain away so long from what it loves and most desires.'7

Such was Arnauld's doctrine, and it is not surprising that blame was mingled with the praises it received. Some Jesuit Fathers, Nouet, Petau and Seguin, in particular, publicly denounced the errors contained in the book. They were supported by Isaac Habert, Abra de Raconis, Bishop of Lavaur, and many others.

Saint Vincent did not remain idle. His position in the Council of Conscience imposed on him the duty of fighting

⁴ P. 728. ⁵ P. 452.

⁷ De la fréquente communion, preface, pp. 36 and 37.

⁶ Preface, pp. 11, 29; p. 83.

in defence of the Faith which was now being threatened. He was, moreover, encouraged to do so by the attitude taken up by the Queen, Mazarin, and Philip Cospeau, Bishop of Lisieux, who was animated with a like zeal against error. The solitary exception on the Council was the Bishop of Beauvais, Augustin Potier. One day, after a meeting of the Council, Mazarin indignantly turned to Saint Vincent and said : 'Observe how His Lordship of Beauvais always supports these evil doctrines.' It was Arnauld's attack on frequent Communion that chiefly revolted the Queen, who never forgot that the house of Austria owed its crown to the devotion of a former Duke of Austria towards the Blessed Sacrament, and that this devotion had always been traditional in the Imperial family.⁸

In the fight against Jansenism, Saint Vincent received even stronger support from the Nuncio, the Chancellor, and Henri II, Prince de Condé, a member of the Council of Regency. He saw them frequently, and whilst asking for their advice and suggestions, made proposals of his own which he believed would be crowned with success. On one occasion, after de Raconis, Bishop of Lavaur, had paid a visit to the Prince,⁹ he wrote to Saint Vincent : 'M. de Condé is really a blaze of fire and light' against the errors of Jansenius. 'He gave me the greatest encouragement to go on with my work,¹⁰ and to second your zeal in defence of the Church.... He ordered me to do two things : first, to see the Nuncio and tell him that he would be very pleased if he could meet His Excellency in some church or another, so that he might speak to him on this matter, and to point out to him the absolute necessity, both for Church and State, of replying to this author. I did so at once and saw the Nuncio who has agreed, after rather prolonged discussion, that I should send him a list of the errors of Jansenius that have been already condemned

8 Des Lions, op. cit., p. 82.

⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, p. 416.

¹⁰ Abra de Raconis (July 16, 1646) published several works on Jansenism in 1644 and 1645. The first was an attack on Arnauld's *De la fréquente communion*.

either by Councils or Popes; I promised to do so. I went back from him to the Prince who was extremely satisfied with this arrangement and assured me that he would strongly represent its importance to the Queen and Cardinal Mazarin; he also renewed the second injunction which he had laid on me, namely, to assure you of his zeal in this matter so that he may promote it in conjunction with you.'

Saint Vincent was not satisfied with opposing the heresy in France; he pursued it to Rome, where two delegates of the party had gone with the object of preventing a condemnation.

Arnauld, in the preface of his book On Frequent Communion had referred incidentally¹¹ to Saints Peter and Paul as 'the two heads of the Church who form only one.' This implied that equal right and powers were accorded to both Apostles and that the Sovereign Pontiff was the successor of one just as much as of the other. Protests were soon heard against this statement, to which the Jansenists replied.¹² Saint Vincent knew that the Holy See was sensitive on this point, and adroitly seized the opportunity that had presented itself. He arranged for a manuscript work of a scholarly theologian against the alleged equality of the two Apostles to be sent to Cardinal Grimaldi,¹³ and three months later, on January 24, 1647, the Pope censured this doctrine as dangerous and contrary to the Constitution of the Church.

This was not the only point that Saint Vincent regarded as reprehensible in Arnauld's *Frequent Communion*. He read the book carefully, and we have his considered judgement on it, a judgement that every intelligent man will applaud.

It is for the Church and the Church alone, he says, to revert to the practices of the first centuries or to allow them to die out; the Church is free, in matters of discipline, to evolve as circumstances may dictate, and it is a duty, as far as the faithful are concerned, to fall in with this evolution. By what right, he asks, does Arnauld claim to restore the

> ¹¹ P. 27. ¹² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 66, note 1. ¹³ Ibid., p. 65. Vol. III.-L

practice of interposing several months' penance between the accusation of sins and their absolution and, consequently, the reception of Holy Communion?

Moreover, his reform cannot be reconciled with the duty of Paschal Communion to which all the faithful are bound by positive precept.

It would be easy to deduce from the principles advanced by Arnauld against frequent Communion that it is better not to communicate at all. The learned doctor clearly sees and even admits this, but excuses himself from drawing the conclusion by saying that people would regard a man as singular who never went to Holy Communion. Such an excuse is futile and is really astonishing when put forward by a man who was not afraid of advising many other singularities. Furthermore, what is to be said of the manner in which Arnauld carries out his teachings in practice, for he says Mass every day? What admirable humility ! Saint Vincent ironically remarks.¹⁴

Those of the faithful who, acting on the principles contained in the book On Frequent Communion, preferred not to make their Easter duty, were far more consistent than the author. During the years following the publication of this work, the parish priests of Paris ascertained that the number of Easter Communions progressively diminished. In 1648, there was a fall of three thousand in the parish of Saint-Sulpice alone and of one thousand five hundred in that of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet.¹⁵ Communions made from devotion showed still more strongly the effect of the new doctrines. In parish churches and chapels of religious communities, absence from the Holy Table was particularly noticeable on the first Sundays of the month and on festivals. Saint Vincent, writing in 1648, says :16 ' Scarcely any ... or very few are to be seen . . . unless a small number in the Iesuit Church.'

The theological discussions on Penance and the Eucharist did not put an end to the debates on the thorny questions

14 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 371.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 323

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 322; cf. Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. VIII, Sect. I, p. 77.

connected with divine grace. On November 27, 1643 the King imposed the Bull In eminenti on the faculty of theology, and some days later (December 11) the Archbishop of Paris invited his clergy to conform with its teachings in their sermons and catechetical instructions. This Bull forbade all debate, discussion and writing on grace, free-will and predestination, and by doing so, deprived the professors of the Sorbonne of a freedom which they had hitherto enjoyed and on which they set great store. They were displeased with the royal edict and sent four deputies, Charton, Hallier, Habert and Duval to present their respectful remonstrances to the Nuncio, who told them that the Bull should be understood as referring solely to condemned propositions ; and with this interpretation the delegation was content, and all opposition ceased.

On January 15, 1644 the faculty forbade all doctors and bachelors ' to approve or defend the propositions censured by the Bulls of Pius V, Gregory XIII and Urban VIII.' All the bachelors of divinity did not obey; some inserted in their printed theses passages omitted from their manuscripts, and others orally defended errors that had been eliminated from their theses.

In the meantime Arnauld was carrying on his campaign; in 1644 he published an *Apology for Jansenius* which might just as well have been called an *Apology for the Augustinus*. With his admirable talent for exposition and his marvellous gift of clarity he was able to make the public take a passionate interest in questions that hitherto had not even been heard of outside theological circles. Ladies of fashion read him with pleasure, and were both proud and happy at the idea that they were quite capable of discussing theology in their salons.

Arnauld had not dealt lightly with Habert who replied with A defence of the faith of the Church and of the ancient tradition of the Sorbonne touching the principal elements of grace (1644). The Jansenist theologian then brought out a Second Apology for Jansenius (1645) to which the Bishop of Vabres responded with Theologiæ græcorum Patrum vindicatæ circa universam materiam gratiæ. If Habert had truth on his side, it must be admitted that Arnauld was a far abler controversialist, and one who proved himself capable of gaining the ear of the public. Habert, not content with written attacks, now proceeded to deeds; he denounced to Rome eight propositions taken from the Augustinus.

Saint Vincent was terrified at the progress of Jansenism. On May 2, 1647, he wrote :17 ' The new opinions are causing such havoc that it seems as if half the world has succumbed to them. . . . What should we not do to rescue the Spouse of Jesus Christ from this shipwreck !' In 1648 he assembled at Saint-Lazare, James Pereyret, Grand Master of the College of Navarre, James Charton, Canon Penitentiary of Paris, Nicholas Cornet, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, and John Coqueret, Doctor of the College of Navarre, to study together the best means of uprooting the error. A plan of campaign was doubtless drawn up, but there is no documentary evidence extant¹⁸ from which we might learn One of the doctors present at this meeting, its details. Nicholas Cornet, on July 1, 1649, submitted six propositions from the Augustinus to the theological faculty of the Sorbonne, to which his colleagues added a seventh. However, after a thorough discussion of the subject, this latter and one of the other six were withdrawn, and only five propositions retained that were deemed worthy of censure. This decision was strongly opposed in the heart of the Sorbonne itself, and sixty of its theologians appealed to the Parliament against their colleagues' action ; their appeal was granted.

The opponents of Jansenism now made a move in another direction; they turned to the representatives of the Clergy of France who held a General Assembly in May, 1650, and there met with the support which they had expected. It was decided that a petition to the Holy See should be drawn up and submitted to the bishops for their signatures. Habert, Bishop of Vabres, drafted the document.

'Most Holy Father,

'The faith of Peter, which never fails, most rightly desires that a custom that is both admitted and authorised in the Church should be preserved, namely, that questions of greater moment (*causæ majores*) should be referred to the Holy Apostolic See. In obedience to this just law we have

¹⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 183. ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 323.

deemed it necessary to write to Your Holiness touching an affair of great importance as regards religion.

'It is now ten years since France, to our great regret, has been disturbed by most violent disputes arising from the posthumous book and doctrine of Cornelius Jansen, Bishop of Ypres. These disturbances should have been appeased both by the authority of the Council of Trent and by the Bull of Urban VIII, of happy memory, in which he pronounced against the dogmas of Jansenius and confirmed the decrees of Pius V, and of Gregory XIII against Baius. Your Holiness, by a new decree, has established the truth and binding force of this Bull, but as each proposition in particular has not had a special note of censure attached, some have thought that ways of employing their tricks and evasions still remained. We have hopes that this method of evasion will be entirely removed if Your Holiness is pleased. as we now very humbly beseech you, to define clearly and distinctly what is to be held on this matter. Hence we beg you to be pleased to examine and to give a clear and definite judgement on each of the following propositions, on which dispute is most dangerous and discussion most inflamed.

'First: Some of God's precepts are impossible to just men who wish and strive to observe them, considering the powers they actually have; and the grace by which these precepts may become possible is also wanting.

'Second : In the state of fallen nature no one ever resists interior grace.

'Third : To merit, or to demerit, in the state of fallen nature, we must be free from all external constraint but not from interior necessity.

'Fourth : The Semipelagians admitted the necessity of interior preventing grace for all acts, even for the beginning of faith, but they fell into heresy by claiming that this grace is such that man may either follow or resist it.

'Fifth: It is Semipelagianism to say that Jesus Christ died or shed His blood generally for all men.

'Your Holiness has quite recently had experience of how powerful is the authority of the Apostolic See in crushing error in the matter of the two-fold head of the Church; the tempest was immediately calmed and the winds and sea obeyed the voice and command of Jesus Christ.

'This it is that has led us to beseech you, Most Holy Father, to pronounce a sure and certain judgement on the meaning of these propositions, you to whom Jansenius, when at the point of death, submitted his work; and by this means dissipate every kind of obscurity, reassure wavering minds, put an end to divisions and restore tranquillity and splendour to the Church.

'Whilst our souls are enlightened by this hope, we offer up to God our vows and desires that the immortal King of Ages may grant you many happy years and, after a century, a most happy eternity.'¹⁹

It was of the utmost importance to let the Holy Father see that the French episcopate as a body desired the condemnation of the five propositions. The petition was printed and a copy sent to each of the bishops.

¹⁹ The following is the text of the propositions condemned by Innocent X on May 31, 1653, and also by Alexander VII on October 16, 1656, and again by Clement XI on July 16, 1705.

- (1) Aliqua Dei præcepta hominibus justis volentibus et conantibus secundum præsentes quas habent vires, sunt impossibilia ; deest quoque illis gratia, qua possibilia fiant. Declarata et damnata uti temeraria, impia, blasphema anathemati damnanda et heretica.
- (2) Interiori gratiae in statu naturae lapsae numquam resistitur. Declarata et damnata uti heretica.
- (3) Ad merendum et demerendum in statu naturae lapsae non requiritur in homine libertas a necessitate, sed sufficit libertas a coactione. *Declarata et damnata uti* heretica.
- (4) Semipelagiani admittebant praevenientis gratiae interioris necessitatem ad singulos actus, etiam ad initium fidei : et in hoc irant haeretici, quod vellent eam gratian talem esse, cui posset humana voluntas resistere vel obtemperare. Declarata et damnata uti falsa et heretica.
- (5) Semipelagianim est dicere, Christum pro omnibus omnino hominibus mortuum esse aut sanguinem fudisse. Declarata et damnata uti falsa, temeraria, scandalosa, et, intellecta eo sensu ut Christus pro salute dumtaxat praedestinatorum mortuus sit, impia, blasphema, contumeliosa, divinae pietatis derogans, et heretica. (The hope expressed that the Pope might live for a century was then customary in such letters.)

By January, 1651, forty bishops had already given in their names, but this was only about a third of the whole number. Saint Vincent and Father Dinet, the King's Confessor, worked hard and energetically to secure new signatures.

The Saint sent copies of the petition to the Bishop of Cahors, Sarlat, Périgueux, Pamiers, Alet, La Rochelle, Lucon, Boulogne, Dax, Bayonne and some others, accompanied by a circular letter inviting them to sign, and a list of the prelates who had already responded to the appeal.²⁰ The Bishop of Dax signed and did his best to induce the Bishop of Bayonne to do the same.²¹ Alain de Solminihac, Bishop of Cahors, hastened to reply on February 13, 1651 : 'I am sending you three copies of letters addressed to Our Holy Father the Pope signed by their Lordships of Sarlat and Périgueux and myself, which I kissed respectfully when I received them.' The illustrious prelate was not satisfied with that : he sent valuable information to Saint Vincent on the means of overcoming the reluctance of others, pointing out that the Bishops of Pamiers and Alet might easily be induced to sign by the Bishop of Lombez, and the Bishop of La Rochelle by the Archbishop of Bordeaux.²² In this last instance, however, the Bishop of Cahors was mistaken, for Raoul de la Guibourgère, Bishop of La Rochelle, declared that he would not sign unless the Jansenist party also asked for signatures to a counter-petition.²³

Stephen Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers, and Nicholas Pavillon, Bishop of Alet, did not reply for some time, and when they did, on April 22, it was to state in a joint letter the reasons that had determined them not to sign. Why, they asked, express a desire for the Pope to make a pronouncement? He would not be listened to. Both parties have taken up definite positions and are hostile to each other ; it is simply foolish to hope that, in such conditions, union can be restored solely by a decision on the part of Rome. Moreover, the sight of one section of the episcopate acting against another is calculated to produce a deplorable effect on the faithful. It would be a hundred times better to begin by calming

²⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, pp. 148, 172, 175.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 172, 198.

²² Ibid., pp. 152–153. ²³ Ibid., p. 172.

passions, and to that end, imposing silence on all controverted points. If, notwithstanding this precaution, disputes still continued, there was only one remedy left : to summon a General Council.²⁴

This letter caused the most intense grief to Saint Vincent, for both these prelates were his friends, but he flattered himself with the hope that they would change their minds as soon as the difficulties they had raised were removed, and he sat down to refute their objections.

'When the Lutheran and Calvinist heresies,' he wrote, 'made their first appearance, if the Church had waited to condemn them until the members of these sects seemed prepared to submit and to be reunited, then these heresies would have remained matters of indifference that could either be followed or not as the case might be, and they would have infected more persons than they have actually done.'

To allege that it is wiser for the Church to abstain from condemning heretics when she fears they may disobey her is simply to say that she should leave the field open to all forms of heresy; what would be the ultimate result to the Church of such a principle? Furthermore, if the only result of her intervention was to enlighten a certain number of those who had gone astray, that by itself would be a sufficient reason to demand it. Now, everybody knows that many of those who adhere to the new doctrines assert that they are quite prepared to leave the party if Rome pronounces against Jansenius. And again, did not one word from the Pope on the alleged equality of Saint Peter and Saint Paul suffice to silence the innovators on that point?

Pavillon and Caulet had expressed a wish that union should be effected on a basis of reciprocal concessions. Saint Vincent replied that that was impossible, for error must yield to truth and not be mingled with it. No doubt, each side claimed to have the truth, and this precisely is the reason for having recourse to the Pope, the Supreme Judge, designated as such by the Council of Trent itself. As a matter of fact, the Jansenist party does not want a judge ; it rejects the Pope's intervention because it fears his decision ;

²⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, pp. 204 and foll.

it would likewise reject the decision of an œcumenical Council, if it thought one was possible. There is not the slightest reason to fear the evil effect of a divided hierarchy on the faithful, Saint Vincent proceeds, because the bishops, with a few exceptions, are all on the same side. Furthermore, there were differences of opinion in former Councils of the Church, and were people scandalised by them ?

So, one by one, the objections raised by Pavillon and Caulet fell beneath the vigorous strokes of Saint Vincent's dialectic. He then went on to examine the efficacy of the remedies they had suggested.

They ask that silence should be imposed on both parties, and to this his reply was unanswerable. Impose silence, he says, why that is just the very thing that has been tried without the slightest result. And the want of success can be easily explained. As a matter of fact, the points that are matters of controversy are not simply speculative questions; they are concerned with the practical affairs of life. A confessor cannot be forbidden to guide his penitent, and his spiritual direction will be bound to conform to his theological principles. Furthermore, this tactic of imposing silence cannot be carried out without grave inconveniences, for it is simply placing truth and error on the same footing, and, as a result of this equality of treatment, allowing error to strike root and spread. Those who talk of calling a General Council forget that a considerable time is required to prepare for a Council and that this evil demands an immediate Almost forty years elapsed between Luther's remedy. rebellion and the Council of Trent, and during that time what progress had heresy not made? Perhaps another forty years would be required now, for Europe is at war and no one knows when peace will come.

Saint Vincent ends his letter with the following words : 'Undoubtedly, My Lords, all these reasons and many others which you know better than I, who would gladly learn them from you, whom I revere as my Fathers and as doctors of the Church, have resulted in this fact, namely, that at the present moment there are very few prelates in France who have not signed the letter previously submitted to you, or, indeed, another which has subsequently been dictated by one of these same prelates, which has been highly appreciated and of which, for that reason, I now send you a copy, for it may perhaps be more pleasing to you.²⁵

Pavillon and Caulet persisted in their refusal and they were not alone. Nivelle, Bishop of Luçon, did not even reply to the letter addressed to him, and Saint Vincent sent him a second copy of the petition with an urgent request 'It is a question,' he wrote, ' of the glory of God to sign. and of the peace of Church and State.' Divisions 'are being caused in families, cities and the Universities; it is a fire that burns more fiercely every day, injuring men's minds and threatening the Church with irreparable desolation, if not promptly remedied. . . . What efforts should not be made to extinguish this conflagration? Who would not grapple with this little monster that is beginning to ravage the Church and that will ultimately bring desolation on her if not stifled at its birth? What would not all these courageous and holy bishops now living wish to have done. if they had been alive in Calvin's time?'26

Despite some inevitable disappointments, Saint Vincent was in the main able to rejoice over the success of the measures he had adopted. By April 23, 1651, sixty signatures had been obtained and some months later the number rose to eighty-five to which three others who had been hesitating were afterwards added.

The Jansenists on their side circulated a petition in which the Pope was begged to wait, before uttering a pronouncement, until the Church of France had examined the five propositions. Eleven prelates signed this document, namely, the Archbishop of Sens, the Bishops of Angers, Châlons, Valence, Orléans, Amiens, Beauvais, Saint-Papoul, Comminges, Lescar and Agen.

Hence the bench of bishops was divided into two or rather three parties of greater or less importance, for it must not be forgotten that some, following the example of the Bishops of Alet and Pamiers, preferred to remain with their arms folded in the belief that the Church of France had nothing to gain from these passionate disputes.

²⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, pp. 204–210.
²⁶ Ibid., p. 175.



ANTHONY ARNAULD

The episcopal petition had not been despatched to Rome before the Jansenists sent delegates to the Eternal City, commissioned to avert the blow which they feared was about to fall on them. Louis Gorin de Saint-Amour was the first to leave Paris; he intended to follow the course of events and to keep his friends at home informed of the progress of affairs. At his request James Brousse, parish priest of Saint-Honoré, de La Lane, Abbé de Valcroissant, both doctors of the Sorbonne, and Louis Angran, a licentiate of theology, joined him in the very end of the year 1651, prepared to help in every possible way.

Whilst the party were taking these precautions, their adversaries, relying on the attitude of the Pontifical Court, waited for divine Providence to bring the whole question to a happy issue. One day, however, John Colombet, parish priest of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, read the following passage in a letter just arrived from Rome : 'These trumpet blowing Molinists who make such a great noise in Paris do not dare even to appear in Rome.' Colombet was annoved at the remark and collected from the ladies of his parish a thousand crowns which he handed over to his friend Francis Hallier, Doctor of the Sorbonne. The latter yielded to Colombet's repeated requests and having induced two other Doctors, Jerome Lagault and Francis Joysel to join him, they all three left Paris provided with letters of recommendation from the Queen to the French Ambassador at Rome.

Saint Vincent had been in close communication with those theologians before their departure; he had encouraged them, given them good advice, promised assistance and invited them to stay with his confrères in Rome.²⁷

Scarcely had Hallier arrived in the Eternal City (May 24, 1652) than he wrote to thank the Saint and to inform him of his first impressions. Summer was at hand and as Saint Vincent was afraid lest the unhealthy climate of Rome might prove injurious to the Doctor and his companions, he replied on June 21: 'Pray do not be in a hurry and do not go out during the heat of the day; Our Lord will be

²⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, pp. 400, 402; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, p. 427.

pleased if, to serve Him better, you husband your strength. We here will strive to assist you by our prayers and our little endeavours in so far as we can ; already the Court has been solicited for other letters which will be sent to you.'²⁸

Hallier's efforts to hasten the examination of the five propositions soon proved successful. The Pope entrusted the matter to the Commission which had been dealing with the Jansenist question since April, 1651, and of which Cardinals Roma, Ginetti, Ceccini and Chigi were members. M. de Saint-Amour was officially notified of the fact by Cardinal Roma, the President, on July 11, 1652, and Hallier on the 17th ; the two Doctors were invited at the same time to prepare their statements. Just when the meetings were about to begin, Cardinal Roma died (September 16) ; his place as a member of the Commission was taken by Cardinal Pamphili, and Cardinal Spada was appointed President.

The first meeting was held on September 24: two meetings were held in October, six in November, four in December and three in January. During these sittings of the Congregation, the consultors, at first eleven in number and afterwards thirteen, discussed in presence of the Cardinals each of the five propositions without arriving at any definite conclusions. At last, on January 27, 1653, the deputies of both parties were summoned before a Congregation at which both Cardinals and consultors were present, and they were given every facility to explain their respective During the sessions held in February, the five views. propositions were taken up one by one and discussed all over again. Ten sessions held during March and April in presence of the Pope were devoted to a third examination.

Before Innocent X delivered judgement he thought it wise to take certain precautions. He allowed the Jansenist envoys, de La Lane, Saint-Amour, Angran, Nicholas Manessier and Father Desmares²⁹ (the two latter had arrived in Rome on April 19) to give a long explanation of their position in his presence ; he questioned the French

²⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 400.

²⁹ Brousse had returned to Paris in 1652 on account of his health.

Ambassador as to the possible consequences of a condemnation and also ordered public prayers.

Saint Vincent was kept fully informed of all that was taking place in Rome by frequent letters from his friends there. He contributed to the success of Hallier and his colleagues both by the financial and moral support he secured for them and by his wise advice.³⁰ There is, unfortunately, a great gap in this section of Saint Vincent's correspondence. We have a few autograph notes from which we learn that he wrote to some person of importance in Rome some days before he learned of the condemnation : 'That his name has been borrowed and that counterfeit letters have circulated from which the Jansenists hope to gain an advantage. To write to Rome that, in the Pope's Bull, the word Inquisition should not be used nor temporal punishments referred to, contrary to the French manner of expression. That M. Hallier and M. Lagault may rest assured they will find on their return to this city a sum of one thousand livres for the object referred to in their letters. To let him know that all are quite disposed to submit to the judgement of His Holiness, no matter what rumours the Jansenists may spread to the contrary. That he should be on his guard as to the persons to whom he writes, and that he should do so with precautions. That it is essential to have a diary of all that took place during their negotiations with full details and all notable circumstances.³¹

The Bull of Condemnation, *Cum occasione*, at length appeared on May 31, 1653; it was officially placarded in Rome on June 9 and immediately afterwards despatched to all Sovereign Courts. Both Hallier and Lagault wrote on that very day to Saint Vincent to inform him of the good news. Eight days later a longer and more detailed letter arrived.

'The Jansenists,' wrote Hallier,³² 'are leaving this city to-day for Loretto; they have been providing their lackeys with new suits of clothes for the past fortnight. They have promised the Pope to obey to the letter. I have reason to

- ³⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, pp. 427, 428.
- ⁸¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, p. 530.
- ³² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, pp. 428-430.

mistrust them because they told their sworn friends that they had not been condemned and that their interpretation, which is the same as that of Jansenius, still held. I know they are making themselves ridiculous by saving so, for Jansenius has been condemned, as also the propositions taken from Jansenius, and even the sense attached to the fifth proposition by the Jansenists has been expressly and specifically condemned, and their interpretations totally rejected as not to the point, by an absolute condemnation. Nevertheless, this attitude shows an obduracy in error which may find imitators at home as well as in this country. That is why we must endeavour to open the eyes of the ignorant and labour energetically to have the Bull published and officially recognised by Parlements, dioceses, faculties (of theology), by the King, their Lordships the Chancellor and the Keeper of the Seal, and by bishops and doctors.

'I am afraid that M. de Saint-Amour is returning posthaste and may give quite a different account of what has happened here, saying that they were not heard at sufficient length...

'You are aware His Lordship the Nuncio has a Brief for His Majesty in which the Pope asks him to see that the Bull is executed, and you can see the importance of that yourself. There is also a Brief for Their Lordships the Bishops.

'We have been requested to remain here until news arrives of how this Bull is received, as they intend here to condemn the *Apologies for Jansenius*, the books entitled *On Victorious Grace, Familiar Theology* and some others, as soon as they see how the Bull has been received. You will see from the enclosed that all the usual official phraseology has been curtailed so as not to impair the validity of our claims.'

As soon as Saint Vincent learned of the condemnation, he invited his Community to rejoice with him at the decision, adding :³³ 'Although God gave me the grace to discern truth from error, even before the definition of the Holy Apostolic See, nevertheless I have not experienced any feeling of vain complacency or vain joy because my judgement happened to be in conformity with that of the Church,

³³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 156.

162

for I fully recognise that this is the effect of the pure mercy of God, for which I am bound to render Him all the glory.'

The Bishop of Cahors was one of the first to whom the Saint communicated the great news. 'The Bull,' wrote Saint Vincent,³⁴ ' reached this city on the Feast of Saint Peter, and having been presented to the King and the Queen by His Excellency the Nuncio, their Majesties most gladly received it, and His Eminence the Cardinal promised to see that it is carried out. All Paris trembled with joy at the news, at least those on the right side, and the others are showing signs that they are willing to submit. M. Singlin, who, like M. Arnauld, is one of the patriarchs of the party, has said that the Pope must be obeyed, and M. du Hamel, parish priest of Saint-Merry, one of the flying-buttresses of this new doctrine, is in the same disposition and has offered to publish the Bull in person in his own Church. Several of the chief personages of the party, such as the Duke and Duchess of Liancourt, say that they are no longer what they were. In short, it is hoped that all will acquiesce. Not indeed that some have not had some difficulty in swallowing the pill, and even say that, although the opinions of Jansenius have been condemned, theirs have not; but I have heard this remark from only one individual.' The Bishop of Cahors shared his friend's joy and replied :35 'I read and re-read the notes attached by Our Holy Father the Pope to these five propositions, especially to the first and fifth, and I cannot refrain from doing so on account of the great pleasure it gives me."

Vincent de Paul did not, however, mention in his letter to Alain de Solminihac that he had paid a large number of visits after the publication of the Bull. He called on those members of religious Orders, theologians and others, who had most contributed by their writings or personal exertions to the condemnation of the five propositions, and implored them, in their hour of victory, to preserve a reserved and dignified attitude, to moderate public manifestations of their delight, to avoid in sermons and conversations any word capable of embittering their opponents, and to treat them with friendliness, charity and respect. The great

³⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 620. ³⁵ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 267.

thing, in his eyes, was not to humiliate opponents who had fallen into error, but to lead their minds back to the truth, and he fully recognised that if this were to be done, it was essential to be moderate in the hour of victory. When Saint Vincent had finished his round of visits to the victors, he considered he had only done part of his duty ; he was also bound to visit the vanquished. He called on the chief leaders of the party, not excepting the solitaries of Port-Royal, held long and affectionate conversations with them, and obtained, or thought he had obtained, an admission that they accepted the pontifical decision.³⁶

The submission, unfortunately, was only momentary. Arnauld proved himself well able to convince his partisans that the five propositions, condemnable in the sense in which the Pope understood them, were orthodox if taken in the sense they had in the *Augustinus*. He even went on to say that, in principle, the attribution of an error to any individual author was not to be reckoned amongst those truths which the Holy See can define. This was the origin of a new theological battle which surpassed the former in bitterness.

Arnauld, always in the breach, continued to produce pamphlets and volumes to expound his ideas, and found a redoubtable adversary in Father Annat.

In March, 1654, forty bishops met in Paris, at Mazarin's suggestion, to deliberate on the measures to be adopted against the innovators. In a circular letter, they invited their colleagues in the episcopate to treat as heretics all those who took shelter behind the distinction of 'fact' and 'right' and to proceed against them 'by all suitable means.' Another letter was addressed to the Pope who replied, on April 23, with a condemnation of forty-nine Jansenist works including some by Arnauld, de La Lane, the Archbishop of Sens and the Bishop of Comminges; and on September 29, with a brief in which he declared that he ' had condemned, in the five propositions the doctrine of Cornelius Jansen contained in his book entitled Augustinus.' This pontifical act, received by the Assembly of the Clergy on May 20, 1655, did not restore Arnauld to a better frame of mind. He

³⁶ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, p. 433.

continued to write and publish ; the Second letter to a Duke and Peer of France (July 10, 1655) produced a great commotion and was denounced to the Sorbonne on November 4. On January 14 and 29, 1656, the famous distinction between 'fact' and 'right' was censured, after a series of stormy debates, and it was decided that Arnauld's name should be expunged from the list of doctors if he did not submit within a fortnight to the judgement pronounced on his writings.

Feeling had by now grown so warm that the decisions of the Sorbonne produced no effect. The Assembly of the Clergy again took up the question, declared that the Church is infallible not only in dogmas but also in dogmatic facts, and informed the Pope of the measures that had been taken to apply the Bull and Brief of Innocent X (September 2 1656). They had not long to wait for a reply. Alexander VII issued the Constitution Ad sacram B. Petri Sedem, in which he condemned the Jansenist distinction, and designates ' those who do not fear to cast doubts and to weaken and enervate the Apostolic Constitution by captious interpretations, disturbers of the public order and children of iniquity.'

As soon as Saint Vincent heard of this condemnation, he renewed the attempts he had made after the publication of the Bull of Innocent X, to induce one party not to place obstacles, by their loud shouts of victory, to the return of the wanderers, and the other to obey unreservedly the voice of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.³⁷

On March 17, 1657 the Assembly of the Clergy joyfully received the Constitution Ad sacram, resolved to have it printed and a copy sent to each bishop with a formulary expressed in the following terms: 'I submit sincerely to the Constitution of Pope Innocent X, of May 31, 1653, according to its true meaning which has been interpreted by the Constitution of our Holy Father Pope Alexander VII, of October 16, 1656. I acknowledge that I am bound in conscience to obey these Constitutions and I condemn with heart and voice the doctrine of the five propositions of Cornelius Jansenius to be found in his book entitled Augustinus which had been condemned by two Popes and the Bishops, that this doctrine is not that of Saint Augustine

³⁷ Ibid., p. 434.

VOL. III.---M

and that Jansenius had explained it wrongly, contrary to the true sense of this holy doctor.' The bishops were invited to sign this declaration within a month.

This decision of the Assembly provoked violent protests and Arnauld was in the front rank of those who attacked it. He tried to establish these three propositions : 'We cannot believe a non-revealed fact the falsity of which is made evident by reason ; no one can sign a formulary expressing a belief which he does not hold ; no one is bound to silence when he foresees that his silence will be injurious to truth.' One may easily guess the conclusions to be drawn from these premises.

The question of the formulary which was passionately debated in 1657 does not seem to have aroused the same interest between the years 1658 and 1660. It was again renewed in 1660 and gave rise to heated controversies, but as Saint Vincent was then dead we need not deal here with this doctrinal dispute.

It may be said that no important step was taken against Jansenism in France up to the Bull of Innocent X, in which Saint Vincent did not intervene. Gerberon³⁸ calls him 'one of the most dangerous enemies which the disciples of Saint Augustine have had ' and Martin Grandin,³⁹ Doctor of the Sorbonne, could truly say : 'As God raised up Saint Ignatius against Luther and Calvin, he raised up Monsieur Vincent against Jansenism.'

³⁸ Histoire générale du Jansénisme, Amsterdam, 1700, 3 vols., oct., Vol. I, p. 422.

³⁹ Evidence given by James Libeauchamp, a witness at the process of Beatification of Vincent de Paul.

CHAPTER LI

THE SPREAD OF JANSENISM

HE ten years spent by Saint Vincent at the Council of Conscience mark the culminating point of his activity in the battle that he had undertaken against error. Once he ceased to be a member of the Council, he considered he had discharged his duty of 'acting' against the innovators, and that it was sufficient for him now 'to defend himself'¹ or rather others, more particularly his own friends and the communities he directed, from Jansenist doctrines.

The characteristic feature of his defence was perpetual vigilance, for he fully realised how subtly the heresy was penetrating in every direction. In point of fact, Jansenism was superficially most attractive, for what did its disciples aim at but the restoration of the ancient discipline of the Church, that penance should be proportioned to the sin, that the Blessed Sacrament of the altar should be worthily honoured and that the lax morality of the casuists should be eradicated? And, as a matter of fact, there were many Jansenists who were models of piety, chastity, mortification and charity. During the famine of 1652 the Ladies of Charity received 400,000 livres from Port-Royal to succour the poor of Champagne and Picardy.²

Indeed, God Himself seemed to have declared in their

¹ Des Lions, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

² The Jesuit Father d'Anjou publicly stated in the pulpit of the Church of Saint Benedict that this sum, collected on the pretext of helping the poor, was actually being used in fomenting cabals against the State. His statements were denied on the following day by the parish priest and shown to be calumnious by Saint Vincent himself. (See *Abrégé de l'Histoire de Port-Royal* par Racine, 3rd ed. Paris, in 12°, p. 65; *Lettres* de la R. M. Marie-Angélique Arnauld, Utrecht, 1742–1744, 3 vols, in-12, Vol. II, p. 573; Hermant, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 633; Pascal, 15° *Provinciale*; etc.) the truths I have stated, truths for which I am ready to give my life. I would say a great deal more to you on this subject if I had leisure. I beseech Our Lord to enlighten you Himself. I beg you, if you persevere in these opinions, not to send me a reply on this subject.' Father Dehorgny gladly accepted the Saint's explanations; he spent a holy life in the Congregation and died holding the office of spiritual director of the Daughters of Charity.¹³

Saint Vincent forbade his Missionaries to discuss controverted questions amongst themselves; he wrote in one of his letters :¹⁴ 'We never dispute on these matters, never preach on them, never speak of them in the company of others unless others speak to us about them; and when this happens, we strive to speak of them with the utmost possible reserve.' If a Missionary forgot himself, he was reprimanded,¹⁵ and if he repeated the offence, he was punished. Father Gilles, an enthusiastic professor of Moral Theology at Saint-Lazare, occasionally spoke with a rather excessive zeal against the new doctrines during his lectures and in his conferences to ordinands; he was sent away to Crécy.¹⁶ Father Damiens, on the other hand, who had just been appointed professor of theology in the same house, revealed in some of his lectures, a slight inclination towards Jansenist opinions; Saint Vincent heard of this, relieved him of his post and persisted in his decision, notwithstanding the repeated requests of his students who went in a body to the Saint's room to ask forgiveness for their professor.¹⁷

If he was averse from controversial discussion before the condemnation of Jansenius, he forbade it with all the more reason afterwards; he then took only one attitude for granted : a simple, respectful interior and exterior submission to the decisions of the Church, without any attempt to elude them by hypocritical subtleties.

¹³ M. de Saint-Amour relates in his *Journal*, p. 125, that he paid Dehorgny a visit in Rome in September 1651 to inform him of the object of his mission.

- ¹⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 328.
- ¹⁵ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. II, p. 6.
- ¹⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, p. 328 ; Vol. IV, p. 355.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 356; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. II, p. 6.

170

Saint Vincent was also happily able to prevent Jansenism from securing any entrance amongst the Daughters of Charity. In their case, the danger of contagion might arise either from ladies who were benefactresses and sworn friends of the party, or even from the clergy. At Chars, the parish priest, the curate and the lord of the manor were energetic propagators of the new doctrines and the Sisters were accordingly much exposed to danger. After waiting patiently for some time, out of consideration for Madame de Herse, who had founded the house, Saint Vincent withdrew the Sisters.¹⁸

Even greater vigilance was needed to check Jansenist manœuvres in regard to the Visitation Order, because the nuns, on account of their relations with noble families and the position of their lady-boarders, were in greater danger of contamination. Moreover, by the influence they exercised, they might become a most valuable instrument for propagating the views of the party.

The Marquise d'Aumont called one day on the Mother Superior of the first monastery at Paris and made a most tempting proposal; she offered to pay all the Community's debts and to defray the salaries of all the clergy attached to the house as chaplains, preachers, confessors and spiritual guides. Only one condition was attached to the gift, namely, that the Marquise herself should select the ecclesiastics. As a matter of fact, the list had already been drawn up. She read out the names; they were all Jansenists. The Mother Superior prudently asked to be allowed a few days to reflect and to consult her friends.

De Maupas, Bishop of Evreux, Saint Vincent and Father de la Haye, Superior of the Jesuits, were asked to meet in the parlour of the Visitation convent and deliberate on the reply to be given to the lady's proposal. 'We cannot,' said the Saint, 'allow nuns to be placed under the guidance of such people. M. de Saint-Cyran, as I know myself, maintained errors that have since been condemned by the Church; you see the evil effects that Jansen's book is now beginning to produce; Luther caused the Church to lose two kingdoms and ten sovereign states; if we are not on

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 536; Vol. XIII, pp. 678, 734.

our guard, these new doctrines will end by causing the loss of the whole of France. It would be a crime to allow the wolf to enter the sheep-fold; I cannot consent to such an act of imprudence. Let the nuns remain in debt; the faith is a more precious treasure than all the gold and silver in the world.'

As the Bishop of Evreux and Father de la Haye were of the same opinion, the Mother Superior informed the Marquise d'Aumont that her gift would not be accepted.¹⁹ The lady was one of the greatest benefactors of the convent and had presented 50,000 livres to it about the year 1633; she had often withdrawn to the convent and deeply edified them all by her piety. As soon as her Jansenist leanings were made manifest, Mother Lhuillier repaid the money and requested the lady not to return in future. The Marquise was deeply grieved; she subsequently offered a sum of 25,000 livres and an annual revenue of 3,000 if she were re-admitted as a boarder; but the offer was refused.²⁰

The second monastery of the Visitation had also to be on its guard against Jansenists. One of the chief leaders of the party, M. Singlin, had formerly known, at the Hospital de la Pitié, M. Gambart, the nuns' confessor, for they had taught catechism there together. As he was anxious to win over Gambart to the new doctrine, he asked him to give board and lodging to a young ecclesiastic of whom Saint-Cyran was the spiritual director. Gambart saw the trap and broke off all relations with Singlin and his friends. The Jansenists, though frustrated in this attempt, were not discouraged ; some priests of the party offered to preach in the convent chapel, but Gambart made enquiries and would have nothing to do with them.²¹

Saint Vincent showed his solicitude even for communities for which he was not directly responsible. Hearing that a

¹⁹ Mother Bollain's account. (See Fondation du premier monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie de Paris, ms. written in 1740 from contemporary memoirs; Rapin, Mémoires, ed. Léon Aubineau, Vol. I, p. 545.)

²⁰ Histoire chronologique des fondations de tout l'Ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie, Bibl. Maz., SS. 2430.

²¹ Année Sainte des religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie, Vol. V, p. 546.

172

member of a religious Order was about to uphold, at a public session in his monastery, a thesis suspected of Jansenism, he requested the Chancellor to put a stop to the proceedings. The thesis was in fact suppressed, despite some opposition from the superior of the monastery; the religious was declared incapable of holding office in his Order, deprived of active and passive suffrages, and removed from his monastery.²²

The Jansenists chiefly relied on the universities for the propagation of their ideas, and hence they intrigued for vacant chairs of divinity to be filled by friends and disciples of the party. Here again they were opposed by Saint Vincent. It was he who, notwithstanding powerful opposition, secured the election, on September 10, 1646, of Nicholas Lemaître, as professor of theology at the Sorbonne. This election, he wrote to Mazarin, whose support he solicited, will prevent Jansenist doctrine from 'being taught publicly in the Sorbonne' and 'will oppose a man of powerful genius to those gentlemen.'²³

Saint Vincent was also attentive to the spiritual interests of students and was deeply grieved when he heard that the Irish students at the Sorbonne, influenced by some of their fellow-countrymen, were passing over one by one to the ranks of the enemy. He assembled at the Bons-Enfants all those who had not vet been contaminated and advised them to organise in order to avoid the contagion. At his recommendation they held several meetings in the College, under the presidency of a Missionary, resolved to form an association and to bind themselves to remain faithful to the traditional teaching of the Church. The rough draft of the declaration stated in substance that 'to secure themselves against the new doctrines that were being taught, preached and explained in catechetical instructions, and into which those of their nation who were studying in Paris might allow themselves to fall by surprise and thus carry this poison into a Church already afflicted by heretical persecution, they bound themselves to hold fast to the decisions of the occumenical Councils, and especially those of the Council

²² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, p. 417.

²⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. III, pp. 40-41, 45.

of Trent, and to the decrees of the Sovereign Pontiffs Pius V, Gregory XIII, Urban VIII and Innocent X against the doctrine of Baius, Jansenius and their followers, and never to teach or to defend any propositions suspected of or condemned for heresy, error, and falsity, and in particular, the five propositions in question.' One doctor and two bachelors of divinity, two Masters of Art and twenty-one students signed this declaration which was inspired by Saint Vincent and of which he kept a copy.

As soon as the Iansenists heard of the resolution taken by the Irish, they denounced them to Courtain, Rector of the University, who, on the pretext that students had no right to issue a doctrinal decision, induced the University to sanction a decree by which the signatories were deprived of their academical qualifications and even the power of taking degrees. The faculty of theology took up the matter and supported its students; it appealed to the Parliament against the Rector and his decree, and declared that the Irishmen's statement was not a doctrinal definition but a simple, personal resolution by which they bound themselves to obey pontifical directions. The Iansenists threw oil on the flames and published apologies in justification of the Rector's action; their efforts, however, proved unavailing, for Parliament annulled the decree passed against the Irish (March 24, 1651). Saint Vincent naturally rejoiced at the result to which it is very likely his efforts contributed.²⁴

Some of his many friends, like Saint-Cyran, fell away; others, like Pavillon, erred by underestimating the inherent dangers of Jansenism. Saint Vincent stretched out a helping hand to all and frequently had the consolation of finding that his advice had been taken.

The Bishop of Alet denied that he was a Jansenist, and in point of fact, he refused to sign the petition of the eleven prelates who wished to have the condemnation of the five propositions deferred; if he did for a time act in opposition

²⁴ Journal de ce qui s'est fait à Rome dans l'affaire des cinq propositions, par Louis Gorin de Saint-Amour, 1662, in-f°. pp. 133 and followed by documentary evidence, pp. 150 etc.; Godefroy Hermant, Mémoires, ed. Gazier, Paris, 1905–1908, Vol. I, pp. 524 and foll; Gerberon, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 459 and foll. .



FRANCIS STEPHEN DE CAULET, BISHOP OF PAMIERS

to the will of the Holy Father on the question of signing the Formulary, he did not do so until after the death of Saint Vincent. Pavillon made his own position clear in a letter to Hippolyte Féret: 'I can assure you that I have no particular connection with those who are called Iansenists. I have paid no attention to anything that merely concerns these persons or that can help or injure them, as far as their special interests are concerned. In all that I do and write I do not take the side of any party; I have never wished to attract persons to myself in order to induce them to follow my opinions or to enter into theirs. You know that I refused to sign either of the letters which the bishops of France wrote to the Pope concerning the examination of the five propositions, and I have always thought that, considering I am a bishop, I am a judge in these matters. I should not embrace either side, or prematurely declare my own opinions.' When in 1651 the question of the Formulary arose. Pavillon maintained against Arnauld that it should be signed, giving as his reason that the Pope's authority should over-ride the views of individuals, and that the distinction of fact and right was a dangerous one in practice.²⁵

Caulet, Bishop of Pamiers, accepted without any mental reservation the condemnation of the five propositions ; he continued to visit and stav at Saint-Lazare where he preached several retreats for ordinands.²⁶ and even endeavoured to detach a number of his friends from the party.²⁷ Unfortunately when Saint Vincent was no longer there to guide him, he allowed himself to be over-ruled by Pavillon.

Hippolyte Féret, parish priest of Saint Nicholas-du-Chardonnet and Vicar General of Paris, had come under the influence of Pavillon during a sojourn of some years at Alet. After a few conversations with Saint Vincent, Féret returned to the straight path. He took the initiative in forming, with Abelly and the Saint, a sort of private association,²⁸ which Caulet apparently afterwards joined,

²⁵ Bibl. Nat., f. fr. 13894, f°. 46 and foll.

²⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, pp. 368, 608; Vol. VII, pp. 17, 22.

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 38.
 ²⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 331–332.

with a view to defending the truths attacked by the Jansenists.²⁹

John des Lions, Dean of the Faculty of Theology and of the Church of Sens, was one of those whom the little society sought to wean from Iansenism. The bonds of close friendship that united him to Saint Vincent and his frequent sojourns at Saint-Lazare gave some hope that his resistance might be worn down, but that was not to be the case. At one time he would argue that the miracles of the Holy Thorn at Port-Royal constituted a sort of divine approbation of Jansenist teachings, and at another he would say that he deferred his submission in the hope that he would induce the Duke and Duchess of Liancourt to submit with himself. One day when making a retreat at Saint-Lazare, he was urged by Saint Vincent to come to the point; he said he would vield if the Pope, by a personal letter, would settle his difficulties. The Saint took him at his word : 'Write your letter,' said he, 'it will be presented to the Pope and you shall have a reply.'30 The Pope did reply but Des Lions still hesitated. As Saint Vincent attached much importance to winning this obstinate theologian, he sent Caulet to see him at Sens,³¹ and as soon as the Constitution of Alexander VII appeared, it was immediately despatched to Des Lions. ' In the name of God, sir,' wrote Saint Vincent in a covering letter, 'do not delay any longer. . . . It is a question involving your salvation. . . . I beg you to hasten and not to be displeased with me because the most ignorant and abominable of men addresses you in this way, since what he tells you is true. If animals have spoken and wicked men prophesied, I too may be able to speak the truth, even though I am an animal and a wicked man.' His entreaties proved useless. Des Lions wrote in reply that he was waiting for a suitable opportunity when his own submission would bring about that of his friends.³²

Saint Vincent refused to acknowledge himself defeated. Some months later, on October 16, 1657, he gathered around

- ²⁹ Des Lions, op. cit., p. 130.
- ³⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, p. 435.
- ³¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, p. 38.
- ³² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. XII, pp. 435-438.

176

him at Saint-Lazare, Caulet, Féret, and Des Lions to make another attempt to arrive at a decision. Des Lions set out his motives for not signing; he thought that if he signed it would be a sin against truth or charity. 'Will you take the sin on yourselves?' he asked his friends, who all in turn said that they would, and did so with such conviction and energy that Des Lions was affected. 'On leaving this conference,' he wrote, ³³ ' I felt as if a great weight had been lifted from my heart, and I experienced a calm and tranquillity which grew stronger as the days went by, although I had entered the conference in a very disturbed state of mind and with a sort of resolution or belief that I should not change my views, no matter what was said.' The Bishop of Pamiers 'made a remark that touched me deeply, namely, that if this party and its doctrines were of God they would never have produced in men's minds such symptoms of pride. rebellion, apostasy and wickedness, etc. as may be seen from many accounts of which we hear daily. . . . Finally, I left this conference more converted than persuaded, and I did not say or promise anything for the moment unless that I should wait for some time to see if there were yet any means of reuniting men's minds and hearts.'

This 'some time' lasted all Des Lions' life for he was afraid of falling out with his friends in the other camp.

Amongst these friends were two with whom Saint Vincent was well acquainted; these were the Duke and Duchess of Liancourt, both of whom had given a written promise to the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice that they would leave the party as soon as the Pope had condemned it. When Innocent X spoke, they declared they accepted the pontifical decision. Their deeds, however, did not tally with their words; the castle of Liancourt was a recognised meeting place for Jansenists; they sent their grand-daughter to Port-Royal where they went themselves from time to time to make retreats in a hermitage that had been built for them, and to justify their conduct, they even declared that they had always remarked the most entire submission to the Holy See in all those around them.

When the Duke returned from his country seat shortly

³³ Des Lions, op. cit., p. 130.

before Candlemas Day 1655, he went to his confessor, Charles Picoté, a supernumerary priest attached to the Church of Saint-Sulpice. As the Duke refused to promise that he would never set foot again in Port-Royal, Picoté refused to absolve him or rather asked for some days to reflect and take advice. That very evening de Liancourt, who had some business at Saint-Lazare, related the whole incident to Saint Vincent, who, in his kindness, consoled the Duke as well as he was able, and with de Liancourt's consent, set off for Saint-Sulpice where he had a conference with MM. Olier, de Bretonvilliers and Picoté. It was decided that a number of doctors of divinity should be consulted, and the decision reached was that Picoté had acted wisely.

This refusal of absolution enraged the Jansenists, who gave vent to their indignation in a fresh spate of pamphlets. Arnauld published an attack against Olier in his Letter to a person of rank to which the Sulpicians and their friends replied. Arnauld returned to the charge in a Second Letter to a duke and peer of France which provoked intense and widespread excitement. He was condemned by the Sorbonne, but still maintained his views.³⁴

The subsequent behaviour of the Duke and Duchess of Liancourt showed that Picoté had made no mistake when he decided that they were Jansenists. It would seem as if Saint Vincent was referring to the de Liancourts when he made the following remarks at a conference held on April 27, 1657: 'I knew two persons who, for a fairly long time, lived like saints and gave alms in abundance to the poor; they have allowed themselves to adopt some new opinions of the day, to which their poor minds are so strongly attracted that hitherto no means has been discovered of inducing them to abandon these opinions, despite all the reasons that have been urged for their doing so. . . . I confess I have never seen anything that has given me such a vivid image of hell as this.'35

Port-Royal had also snatched from Saint Vincent a disciple

³⁴ Rapin, Mémoires, Vol. I, pp. 237 and foll.; Bibl. Nat. f. fr. 13,896. f°. 301 et suiv ; Hermant, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 624 ; Gerberon, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 75 and foll. ³⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 399.

178

on whom he had once founded great hopes; this was M. Singlin, formerly a draper's assistant, who at twenty years old, felt urged to leave the world and take Orders. He was recommended to make a retreat at the Bons-Enfants where Saint Vincent welcomed and encouraged him; the Saint also secured a place for him in a College where, in the company of little boys in the lowest form, Singlin began to study Latin. The master took pity on him, separated him from the children and gave him private lessons. When his classical studies were completed, he was enabled, thanks to his saintly protector, to move up the various grades of the ecclesiastical state until he was ordained deacon, when Saint Vincent obtained for him the post of catechist at the Hospital de la Pitié.

Margaret Périer tells us³⁶ that one day when Singlin was leaving the Church he saw Vincent de Paul at the end of the courtyard in company with another person. Whilst he was standing at the foot of the steps a devout woman, known as Sister Joan, came up and said :

'Are you waiting for M. Vincent?'

'Yes, I am.'

'So am I. Well, well, sir, we must pray earnestly to God on behalf of the Church because a great persecution is about to arise and blood will be shed.'

'Pray let me have more definite information. What will the persecution be like?'

'It will be horrible. All good people will be persecuted.'

'And,' said Singlin, pointing to Monsieur Vincent, 'will that holy man also be persecuted?'

The woman groaned :

'No, he will be one of the persecutors.'

'Monsieur Vincent,' approached. Singlin walked away from Sister Joan, whom he never saw again, but afterwards, as Margaret Périer tells us, he never failed to remark when one of the solitaries of Port-Royal was exiled or shut up in the Bastille : 'See how the pious woman's prediction is being daily fulfilled ; blood has not yet been shed, but just wait.'

³⁶ Marguerite Périer's account was published in *Recueil de plusieurs pièces pour servir à l'histoire du Port-Royal*, Utrecht, 1740, pp. 167–172.

One cannot repress a smile at these prophecies of unknown devotees even when related by Pascal's niece.

However that may be, shortly afterwards, Singlin was attracted to Saint-Cyran and completely surrendered to his influence. When he was ordained priest, he was chosen as confessor and spiritual guide of the nuns of Port-Royal; he used to meet Saint Vincent from time to time and the latter never ceased to grieve over his falling away and to hope in vain for his return to a better mind.

The Jansenists have never forgiven Saint Vincent for the prominent part which he played in securing the condemnation of their doctrines. They showed this much more clearly after his death than during his lifetime by their violent attacks on the biography of which Abelly³⁷ is the author, by their repeated attempts to prevent his beatification and canonisation, 38 and by the profound contempt with which they speak of his want of learning; we shall not add, as some do, for this is a mere invention, by the way in which they have managed to deform his portraits. When one reads his work on grace, 39 his criticism, in reply to Fr. Dehorgny's observations, on Arnauld's Frequent Communion⁴⁰ and on the latter's various errors, and his letters to the bishops to persuade them to sign the petition to Pope Innocent X,⁴¹ one cannot refrain from admiring his theological science and rare good sense. When this so-called ignoramus maintained that it appertains to the Pope to decide infallibly not only on questions of faith and morals but also on dogmatic facts, that ecclesiastical discipline is a matter of historical evolution, and that the Eucharist has a remedial effect on those who

³⁷ Abelly's work was attacked by Barcos, Saint-Cyran's nephew. (Defénse de feu M. Vincent de Paul . . . contre les faux discours du livre de sa vie, publiée par M. Abelly, s.l., 1668, in-4°; Réplique à l'écrit que M. Abelly a publié pour défendre son livre de la vie de M. Vincent, s.l., 1669, in-4°.

³⁸ Several indications of this opposition may be found in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the correspondence with the French Ambassador at Rome.

³⁹ The study is published in *Saint Vincent de Paul*, Vol. XIII, pp. 147 and foll.

⁴⁰ *İbid.*, Vol. III, pp. 318 and foll. ; pp. 362 and foll.

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 148, 172, 175, 204 and foll.

partake of it and is the food of the weak as well as of the strong, he showed a far more profound appreciation of theological truths than did the pedantic Arnauld.

Saint Vincent, it is true, always felt more at home in the company of his spiritual sons and daughters than on Jansenist battlefields. He was a man who loved peace and union, who had a horror of fighting and who envied the lot of those devout souls who were content to combat heresy by prayer.

We have just seen him in his capacity of superior of several houses of the Visitation Order, watching over the nuns to preserve them from the contagion of heresy; we shall now show that he was equally faithful to the other duties of his office and that he conscientiously fulfilled a trust laid upon him by the first Cardinal de Retz at the request of Saint Francis de Sales himself.

CHAPTER LII

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL, SUPERIOR OF THE VISITATION ORDER

N 1622 Saint Vincent was appointed Superior of the Visitation convents in Paris and exercised that office for the remainder of his life. After the foundation of the first monastery a second was established, and subsequently houses of the Order were founded at Saint-Denis and at the Asylum of Saint Mary Magdalen in Paris ; the direction of a fifth convent at Chaillot may perhaps have been offered to Saint Vincent, but it would have been too heavy a charge for a man already so heavily burthened.¹

The Superior presided at the Chapter every month when he discussed the affairs of the community with the Mother Superior and her councillors. Saint Vincent loved to take advice, and nothing out of the ordinary, nothing of importance was ever decided until he had discussed it fully with the nuns. Whilst preserving liberty of action, he profited by the wise advice and suggestions they were able to give him.

He was bound to make a canonical visitation of each convent every year, and never failed to perform that duty. He interviewed each nun in private, not excepting the novices, and listened with equal attention to all. The respect inspired by his presence was tempered by his great kindness; every Sister felt quite at her ease with him; they all fully confided in him and experienced no difficulty in revealing to him their most secret thoughts and weaknesses. He excused, enlightened, and stimulated, and the nuns left his presence in a more tranquil and courageous state of mind. After giving each Sister the instructions and advice best suited to her actual spiritual state, he then spoke to the entire community, pointed out any abuses that needed correction, suggested and occasionally prescribed such

¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. VII, p. 324.

remedies as in his eyes promised to be most efficacious. His recommendations as a rule dealt with obedience to superiors, deference for the aged, fidelity to rule, union, charity, interior recollection, prayer, preparation for the sacraments, purity of intention, the practice of religious poverty, and the need for mortification and perseverance.

His observations in the course of these visitations were written out in a special note-book and read out several times a year in the chapter-room; this custom was long maintained, for a nun of the Order testified in 1705 that it was still in vogue.² His visits, indeed, produced the happiest 'The community,' wrote a sister, 'became comresults. pletely embalmed with the perfume of his devotion and was filled with a firm and courageous desire to advance in perfection, and this was manifested by the fervour of all the Sisters at their religious exercises.'³ Another Sister added : 'When he made his visitations, or shortly afterwards, incidents that were almost miraculous used to occur. . . . Nuns suffering from scruples or troublesome temptations found that they entirely disappeared after they had spoken of them to this charitable Father; others considerably altered their conduct for the better, thanks to the abundant grace that dwelt in him. Finally, all felt better ; they were improved by each visitation and walked more gaily than ever in the path of perfection ; . . . his blessing was made manifest even in our temporal affairs, when his visitation was concluded.'4

The Visitation nuns also saw Saint Vincent when he arrived to hold spiritual conferences. The custom of conversing together on devotional topics was established quite early in the history of the first monastery. The Saint once wrote to a Mother Superior : 'I very humbly request you to send me written reports of two or three of your conferences; they are intended to serve as a model for a certain family of Our Lord, to whom I suggested this practice and

² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. X, p. 265; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, pp. 316-320, 324-328; deposition of Sister de Chaumont at the process of beatification of Saint Vincent.

³ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, p. 317.

⁴ Ibid., p. 318; Cf. p. 333.

who have begun to carry it out.'⁵ It is not known to what community he refers ; it may quite possibly have been the second monastery of the Visitation, for we know that it followed the example of the first and that in its early days, Saint Vincent was accustomed to go there every week to preside over the conference.

The spiritual needs of those who wished to consult him on matters of conscience also took him regularly to those convents of which he was the spiritual Father. He was not, as a matter of fact, their regular confessor, but his office of superior did not in any way prevent him from interviewing, in particular instances, any nun who had good reasons to consult him. Marie-Louise de Chandenier, for example, stood in habitual need of his encouragement and enlightenment. The annual review of conscience which was customary also brought large numbers to his confessional ; he then devoted all the time he could afford to the nuns, but sometimes a month passed before he had finished with all.⁶

The sick were not forgotten, for they were his favourites. When any one of the nuns was dangerously ill he went at once to see her and to encourage and prepare her for death. He assisted a large number of Sisters in their last agony and would have rendered the same service to all if circumstances had permitted. A lay Sister, exhausted by a severe attack of fever, told him one day that she wished to die. 'Oh, Sister !' he said, 'it is not yet time,' and approaching her, he traced the sign of the cross on her forehead ; shortly afterwards her health began to improve and she ultimately recovered. 'It was M. Vincent who cured me,' she kept on repeating to all who would listen to her.'

Above all 'Monsieur Vincent' had the gift of healing spiritual maladies. Mother Lhuillier, Sister Marie-Louise de Chandenier and Sister Marie-Elisabeth de Lamoignon were cruelly tried by all manner of scruples, doubts and temptations. They always found the Saint quite prepared to listen, reassure and strengthen them. He was accustomed

⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, p. 103.

⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 311.

⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. VII, p 319.

to say; 'In my opinion there is nothing more important than to help a soul in this state.'⁸

Towards the end of his life, when press of work and bodily infirmities rendered travelling both difficult and painful, he went several times from Paris to Saint-Denis to induce a Sister *tourière*⁹ to change her intention of seeking release from her vows in order to be married.

All such occasions as the annual renewal of vows on November 21, the taking of the religious habit, professions, the chief feasts of the Order such as the anniversary of the death of Saint Francis de Sales, and elections, brought Saint Vincent to the convents of the Order.

As their religious Superior, he played an important part in community elections,¹⁰ for the nuns could only vote for one of three, four or five Sisters whose names were on a list which he had prepared, and the order of names indicated the order of his preferences.¹¹ Again, the choice of confessors was entirely in his hands. John de la Font, Blampignon and Gambart carried out these functions to the satisfaction of all, the latter in the second monastery and the two former successively in the first.¹² The acceptance or refusal of new establishments was also one of his duties, and when an offer had been accepted, it was he who appointed the new Superioress and her companions.

The Visitation nuns were not always sent to houses of their own Order; they were often lent to other Communities to restore conventual discipline. Sister de Fonteines and three

⁸ Ibid., p. 318; Année Sainte, Vol. I, p. 44.

⁹ Ibid., p. 327. (A tourière or 'Sister of the Turn.' 'The "turn" is a simple construction of circular revolving shelves placed between the wall that divides the enclosed portion of the monastery from the extern quarters, and is for the purpose of passing goods in and out of the enclosure. The Extern Sisters are colloquially called "Sisters of the Turn".' Saint Francis de "Sales in his letters, London, Sands and Co. 1933, p. 231, note 1.)

¹⁰ The notes of a discourse delivered by Saint Vincent before the election of a Superioress are still extant. (Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XIII, p. 144.)

¹¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. X, p. 741; Vol. XIII, p. 345; Année Sainte, Vol. VII, p. 699.

¹² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 350 ; Vol. VIII, pp. 164, 352, 353, 356 ; Arch. Nat. Y 181, f°. 54 v°.

other Sisters spent some time in the Abbey of Sainte-Perrine. near Mans;¹³ Sister de la Favette and some companions raised up the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the Rue Saint-Honoré¹⁴ from the state of moral degradation into which it had fallen; Sisters de Maupeou and Elisabeth Angélique Fouquet were charged with the office of composing certain differences that had arisen in the Ursuline convent at Melun ;15 Sister Guérin and another Sister, who met with a very bad reception in a convent that had sunk very low both from the spiritual and the temporal point of view, succeeded, in spite of opposition and resistance of all kinds. in leading back the nuns to the path of duty.¹⁶ During the Fronde a number of nuns of various Orders had taken refuge in Paris; Saint Vincent sent some Daughters of the Visitation to take charge of a convent in which the refugees had been assembled.¹⁷ Four years after his death the King had recourse to the first monastery of the Visitation to teach lessons of obedience and humility to the nuns of Port-Roval.¹⁸

If the Daughters of the Visitation were thus able to restore order and regularity in other Communities, this was due to the fact that they faithfully observed them in their own. The observance of rules was, as a matter of fact, held in the highest honour in their convents; Saint Vincent manifested 'a mild yet earnest zeal entirely aflame for the glory of God . . . and a gentle but unshakeable firmness,' in seeing that the rules were strictly observed. The Constitutions of the Order, its directories and books of customs, the writings of Saint Francis de Sales and of Saint Chantal supplied him with guiding principles from which he never departed; he frequently urged the Sisters to read them in the same dispositions as the Israelites, who, on their return from captivity, listened to the reading of the law, shedding

13 Année Sainte, Vol. XIII, p. 296.

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 20.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 435; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, pp. 340, 357, 421, 429, 440. ¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 68.

17 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 406.

18 Année Sainte, Vol. IV, p. 19; Vol. XII, p. 301.

tears in abundance at the thought of their past transgressions.

He was particularly anxious that all rules relating to divine worship, such as the recitation of the office and religious ceremonies, should be carried out most carefully.¹⁹

He showed extreme severity about granting permission to ladies of the world, no matter what their rank, to pay visits to convents over which he had authority. Kings. queens, foundresses and benefactresses, enjoyed this privilege, which he could not abolish, but to prevent a multiplication of exceptions, he periodically called together the Mothers Superior and chief Sisters to revise the list of persons who deserved to be regarded as benefactresses and founders. All ladies whose names were erased from the list were pitilessly denied entrance to the convents save in case of necessity. When Queen Anne of Austria herself intervened on behalf of one of her ladies of honour, she, too, was refused. 20

Louise de la Tour, a daughter of the Duc de Bouillon, also had an experience of how strictly Saint Vincent interpreted the rule of monastic enclosure. To a great nobleman who pleaded for her, Saint Vincent said : 'Your authority, My Lord, and the reasons you have done me the honour of submitting to me, in favour of allowing Mademoiselle Bouillon a right of entry to Saint Mary's, are so pressing that I would not venture to bring forward any objection to them if I were not well aware, sir, that you would not take my action amiss. The Council of Trent forbids bishops and superiors of religious houses to grant permission to persons to enter monasteries of religious women unless in case of necessity; and as this case does not come under that head, it is the whole cause of the difficulty, and I do not consider I can grant such a permission without offending God; furthermore, this is also the opinion of a theologian in whom I have great confidence; hence I resolved some years ago not to grant such permissions save in cases of necessity, and accordingly I have refused a large number of ladies, even princesses, of whom Madame the Princess de Carignan is

¹⁹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. VII, pp. 324–325.
²⁰ Ibid., pp. 322–323; Cf. Bk. III, Ch. XXII, p. 317.

one and she will never forgive me for having done so. Moreover, My Lord, I shall mention this fact to yourself alone, visits such as these bring about the ruin of religious communities, and a great difference is to be observed in houses of the same Order according as they tolerate or prohibit visits of this nature.'21

It was not merely towards ladies of the world that Saint Vincent manifested such great severity; women consecrated to God were not treated otherwise. The Visitation Convent at Saint-Denis was separated from that of the Ursuline nuns only by a boundary wall which collapsed on one occasion with the result that it became quite easy for the two communities to intermingle; they were all the more anxious to do so as some of the nuns in each of the convents were closely related. The priest who was spiritual superior of the Ursulines gave them permission to meet the others, but Saint Vincent refused the Visitandines to do so, saying 'nuns are dead to the world and should no longer recognise any earthly relations.²²

This severity may be partly explained by his fear lest the nuns of the Visitation Order might be infected with Jan-The heresy had, in point of fact, glided like a senism. subtle poison into some of the holiest communities, and as Saint Vincent well knew, the friends of Port-Royal were prepared to attempt even the impossible in order to induce the Daughters of Saint Francis de Sales to adopt their errors.²³ We have already mentioned some of their insidious manœuvres and how they were checkmated.

As Saint Vincent was bound to supervise the observance of rules, so too he was obliged to warn and correct transgressors. He did so, not to mortify and humiliate, but to bring about an amendment; not from a spirit of anger or resentment, but from a spirit of charity; not harshly but peacefully; not when the culprit seemed little disposed to accept correction but at a suitable moment. As he wisely remarked : 'Medicine is not given without great necessity

23 Ibid., p. 320.

²¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, p. 265; Cf. Vol. VIII, p.133. ²² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. VII, p. 326.

to those who are suffering from fever.' When it was his duty to humble a person, he did not regard the humiliation as an end but as a means, and before concluding, he always had a kind word to temper the pain his admonition might have caused. A Visitation nun wrote : 'He had marvellous skill in humbling haughty spirits, and did so as if he was simply conversing at recreation, without their ever thinking of it'; if Sisters had disobeyed in a serious matter, 'he reprimanded them in such a manner that his admonition filled them with shame.' What, they thought, will the reproaches of God be like at the Day of Judgement, if the words of a man are now so powerful to cast down and to abase.²⁴

Saint Vincent's authority extended over the young girls educated in convents of the Visitation Order ; it was to him that the Mother Superior or parents had to turn for permission for their children to absent themselves from the convent, and this permission was rarely granted. On August 26, 1660, Louis XIV and the Infanta of Spain who had recently been married at Saint-Jean-de-Luz made their state entrance into Paris which was magnificently decorated and thronged with joyous, cheering crowds. The young girls naturally hoped they would be allowed to enjoy the treat and their parents were anxious to take them out to see the spectacle. Madame de Sévigné asked permission for her little girl and was refused ; the Marquis de Lionne asked permission for his and it was given.²⁵ Saint Vincent, who was then on his death-bed, had doubtless good reasons for granting to some what he refused to others, but such an attitude was liable to be misinterpreted. Mother Le Roy interceded for all the parents, assured him that a general permission would entail no inconveniences, and on receiving this assurance, the kind-hearted old Saint surrendered.²⁶

From the foregoing pages the reader may easily form some idea of the heavy additional burthen entailed by Saint Vincent's functions as Superior of the convents of the Visitation Order in Paris and Saint-Denis. These duties

- ²⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, pp. 387, 392.
- ²⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 64, 76; Vol. V, p. 603.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 320-321.

entailed anxieties of a two-fold nature : in the first place, he did not think he had sufficient time at his disposal to carry out the duties of his office properly, and in the second, he knew that some of his confrères might appeal to his own example in case they wished to hear nuns' confessions, which they were forbidden to do by their rule.²⁷ He once said in a letter, referring to this particular duty : 'For me it is a cross and the heaviest cross I have to bear'; hence he bore it somewhat unwillingly, and only out of obedience to the Archbishop of Paris who insisted on his remaining at his post.

Early in October 1646, when in the course of his annual retreat he was examining his conscience on his duties as Superior General of the Mission, he was filled with sorrow at the thought of all the acts of negligence of which he believed himself guilty, and on further reflection, he came to the conclusion that if he was to improve, he would have to restrict the field of his activities. When he asked himself which of these employments he should abandon, he at once thought of the bond that united him to the Visitation Order and resolved to break it. After he had fully decided, he wrote to Mother Le Roy²⁸ and to Sister de Fonteines;²⁹ as the latter might be placed in an awkward position by his resignation, he gave her the names of a number of ecclesiastics fully qualified to act as Superior. 'There are,' he wrote, 'so many other persons in Paris who will serve you in such a way as to bring down God's blessings on you. There is, for instance, M. Féret, who had just been made parish priest of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet, and also M. Abelly. Both of them are men who will serve you in the spirit of our Blessed Father (Saint Francis de Sales) and with incomparably greater grace than I can; I even offer you my services to beg them to accept the office, provided your Mother does not write to me or ask anybody else to write or speak to me with a view to inducing me to resume the office. and that you will dispense me from the duty of paying you a visit, as I have resolved not to go near the convent in future, whilst protesting to you, my dear Sister, that this is not because I am in any way displeased. Oh ! no, I assure

²⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VII, p. 200.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 75. ²⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 63.

you of that before God: it is just simply for motives of conscience, as I have already told you. You have shown only too much charity towards me and have been only too patient with me in my miseries. I beseech Our Lord to reward you for that, and to forgive me the sins I have committed in your regard.'

The Daughters of Saint Mary were stunned by these letters and felt he was asking them to make too great a sacrifice ; they believed they might at least for once disobey their venerable Superior and wrote him a number of beseeching letters to which the only reply they received was that his resolution was irrevocable, he would never again put a foot in their convents, and would deal with their affairs only by letter. Mother de Beaumont, the Mother Superior of the Visitation at Toulouse, united her voice to those of the Sisters in Paris : 'It is quite true,'30 he wrote in reply, 'that I have requested our dear Sisters to forgive me if I can no longer serve them as their spiritual Father on account of the excessive amount of work with which I have to deal and which prevents me from doing things I am strictly bound to do . . . and God knows that this is not from any lack of affection or that I have ever had any reason to be displeased with them. Nay rather, they have never shown me anything but courtesy, kindness and charity. His divine goodness also knows that, in doing so, I am flaving myself alive, but then conscience urges me to confine myself to what I am able to do, and to honour the omnipotence of God by recognising my own powerlessness. So far, they have not yet selected anyone. Up to the present I have done all that was necessary, but I have not gone to see them whilst waiting for them to select a Superior.'

The requests that touched Saint Vincent most deeply were doubtless those of the Marquise de Maignelay to whom he owed so much; she had arranged to meet him at the house of M. du Fresne, but he refused to go. 'It is,' he wrote,³¹ 'with all possible respect and humility, Madame, that I beg you, prostrate in spirit at your feet, to forgive me if I do not, in obedience to your command, go to M. du

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 194. ³¹ Ibid., p. 276.

Fresne's to-day, for as I cannot do what he has suggested, for reasons of conscience which, Madame, I mentioned to you; I should feel it far too deeply to have to utter a refusal in presence of her whom I am bound to obey, in this present instance, more than any one else in the world from motives both of duty and affection; and I protest to you, Madame, that I would far rather die than disobey you, if there were anything less than my own salvation in question, and that, far from my conduct being due to any want of affection for these dear, good daughters, I would, if I followed my natural inclination, set off to them at the very moment I am now speaking to you.'

The Marquise de Maignelay, however, was not a woman who could easily be turned aside from her purpose; as she could not persuade Saint Vincent herself, she made up her mind to try some other means; and as her brother was the Archbishop of Paris and her nephew the Co-adjutor, she had instruments at her disposal which she well knew how to The Co-adjutor took the matter into his own employ. hands ; he commanded Saint Vincent to carry out his duties as Superior of the Visitation Order, and the Saint, after absenting himself for a year and a half from the convents, submitted.³² After the death of the Archbishop, he resolved to make another attempt which he hoped would now be successful; the Cardinal was in prison, the Marquise de Maignelay was dead, and he imagined that the Vicars General would be more amenable; but in this he was He was forced to wait for a more favourable mistaken. occasion; in 1654 he said: 33 'If God is pleased that His Eminence the Cardinal de Retz should return, I will do all in my power to induce him to set me free.' Again in March 1660, when he had been confined to his room for several months by infirmities that seemed incurable, he repeated his request, feeling almost certain that it would be heard, but again he was refused.³⁴

It was God's will that he should carry this cross till his

³² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 287; Vol. V, p. 80; Vol. XI, p. 167; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIV, p. 231.

³³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 167.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 272.

192

death; and the cross became heavier during the last two months of his life, because a third convent of the Order was established. The numerous letters which in 1660 he exchanged with Daughters of the Visitation show that his illness did not prevent him from dealing with the interior government of their convents even in matters of the smallest detail.³⁵

³⁵ The general inventory of documents and papers of the first monastery mentions a packet of several letters of the late M. Vincent de Paul. This treasure has unfortunately, like so many others, been lost. (Arch. Nat. S 4,783, a seventeenth cent. ms.)

CHAPTER LIII

THE FIRST MONASTERY OF THE VISITATION ORDER AT PARIS¹

BEFORE Saint Chantal left Paris, the Sisters of the first monastery in that city had elected as Superior, Mother de Beaumont, who concealed under a rather cold exterior a heart full of charity. The second monastery, founded in 1626, needed her assistance, and to replace her, Hélène Angélique Lhuillier, a sister of Madame de Villeneuve, was elected Mother Superior on July 3, 1627.²

Notwithstanding the void left by the Sisters who had gone with Mother de Beaumont to the Faubourg-Saint-Jacques the community increased to such a degree that it had either to build or to seek fresh quarters. As the Hôtel de Cossé, a splendid group of buildings with extensive grounds and a beautiful garden, was quite close, Saint Chantal, who was then in Paris, advised the Sisters to purchase it, since it had all the advantages that could be desired. A chapel was provided, an infirmary built, and at length, on August 14, 1629, the nuns, accompanied by several ladies, walked in procession to their new home, chanting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin as they moved through the two adjacent they had just left and that of the mansion in which they were to reside for the future. Madame de Villeneuve, the

¹ Most of the information to be found in this chapter has been taken from : 1. Histoire chronologique des fondations de tout l'Ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie (Bibliot. Maz., ms. 2430) ; 2. Année Sainte des religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie (12 vols. quarto, Vol. III, pp. 78-80, Vol. VI, pp. 61-62 and elsewhere) ; 3. La vie de Madame de Villeneuve par le P. de Salinis, Paris, 1918, in-8°; 4. La vie de l'illustrissime Serviteur de Dieu Noël Brulart de Sillery, Paris, 1843, in-12.

² The Daughters of the Cross at Tréguier have an ancient manuscript life of Mother Lhuillier in their archives.

Princess de Conti and the foundresses took up their residence in the house the nuns had left; they remained there until a day came when, in order to provide accommodation for Commander de Sillery they retired to the infirmary, from which the sick had been removed.

Noël Brulart de Sillery had for long preferred the joys of this world to a devout life, but he was led to God by reading the works of Saint Francis de Sales; he strove for and attained perfection under the guidance of Saint Vincent de Paul, who gradually brought him into touch with the Visitation Order, both to facilitate the action of grace on the Commander's soul, and to provide the nuns with a generous benefactor. On December 28, 1630, the eighth anniversary of the death of the Bishop of Geneva, the parish priest of Saint-Jean-en-Grève was to preach his panegyric in the chapel of the Visitation. Saint Vincent brought the Commander with him to hear the sermon, and afterwards arranged an interview with Mother Lhuillier. The conversation lasted two hours, and proved, as the Saint had foreseen, to be the beginning of a connection that turned out to be a happy and profitable one both for the devout Commander and for the nuns.

In July 1632, Noël Brulart de Sillery left his magnificent mansion in the Rue Saint-Honoré to be the guest of the Visitation nuns. He added a large wing to his new residence. planted and embellished the garden placed at his disposal, and laid the foundation stone of a large and beautiful chapel which is at the present day a Protestant Church. This Church, a real architectural gem, was built at de Sillery's expense by the famous François Mansart on the plan of Our Lady of the Rotunda or Saint Mary of the Martyrs at Rome³ and consecrated on September 14, 1635 by the Archbishop of Bourges, a brother of Saint Chantal. The entrance to the church was from the Rue Saint-Antoine and the first members of the Tuesday conferences began their apostolic labours by preaching a mission to the workmen employed on the building. When the church was complete, Commander de Sillery placed some excellent pictures on its walls, furnished the sacristy with exquisite vestments and silver plate,

⁸ The Pantheon.

and founded two Masses in perpetuity; nor did his liberality end there, for in his lifetime, he always supplied the community with all the wheat, wine and wood for fuel that it needed.

The nuns increased so rapidly in numbers that Saint Vincent was easily able to send Sisters to establish a branch at Rouen in 1630, and in the following year, at Meaux and Caen.

Amongst the postulants admitted to this monastery we may mention in particular Sister Gertrude Elisabeth Sévin, ⁴ daughter of Mademoiselle Sévin who was the first to introduce soup-kitchens in the parishes of Paris, and a niece of the celebrated François Véron, parish priest of Charenton. Whilst Saint Francis de Sales was residing at Paris in 1618 and 1619, Véron presented his nephews and nieces to the Bishop for his blessing; placing his hand on little Gertrude's head (she was then five years old), the prelate said, with his pleasant smile : 'Here is a little Visitation nun.' The child at once protested : 'I don't want to be a nun.' To which the Bishop quietly replied : 'But you will one day.' The young girl was, and long remained, of a lively, sprightly, frivolous disposition and could never understand why her mother devoted herself to the service of the poor ' without gaining anything but a dirty load of vermin.'

Saint Vincent had such a high opinion of Mademoiselle Sévin, mère, that he asked her to give him her opinion of a girl who, it was said, had been the recipient of some extraordinary divine favours. On the day after Mademoiselle Sévin had taken the girl into her own house in order to observe her more closely, a loud noise was heard coming from the guest's room. They all ran to it, threw open the door and found drops of blood flowing from the body of the girl, who said in reply to those who questioned her : 'I have just shared in the scourging of Jesus Christ.' Whilst the others were filled with amazement, little Gertrude remained sceptical, and, hunting about the room, found hidden in the sole of a shoe the pen-knife with which the girl had cut herself. Saint Vincent, who was told of the occurrence, congratulated the young lady on her perspic-

⁴ See Année Sainte, Vol. IV, pp. 263 and foll.

acity and added : ' Mademoiselle, the real stigmata of Jesus Christ should be the imitation of His virtues and especially His humility of which He left us so many beautiful examples in the course of His mortal life, leaving us the best of all lessons when He said : learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart and you shall find rest for your souls.' These words produced a deep impression on Gertrude's soul, and from that day forward a remarkable change was observed in her life and conduct. She began to acquire a taste for praver and for reading works of devotion; approached the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist more frequently, and accompanied her mother who visited the poor daily. She next felt drawn to the religious life; she paid a visit to Saint Vincent, and said in her usual gay and open manner : 'Father, I should like to be a nun of Saint Mary; you are the Superior of that community; be kind enough to procure my admission; but above all, promise me that I shall never be made a Superior.' 'I quite agree, my daughter,' he replied, ' that you may serve God very usefully in other positions, but have patience for a while; you are too fond of amusement; just at the moment, your quick mind and vivacious temperament would not fit in very well with the duties of such a holy and serious sort of life as that led by the Daughters of Saint Mary.'

Gertrude Sévin, after waiting some time, was at length allowed to enter the convent; in the beginning, her lively and passionate character found it difficult to comply with the demands of the rule and the duties of obedience. She was scolded; expressed regret for her failings, watched herself more carefully, and in the end, by repressing the impulses of a volatile and instinctive nature, she became one of the most fervent Sisters in the house.

The year 1633 marked the end of the second triennate of Mother Lhuillier, who was succeeded by Mother Anne Mary Bollain.⁵ This nun had had the happiness to receive the habit at the hands of Saint Francis de Sales himself who was then in Paris. The first time the Bishop of Geneva met her, he asked : 'Pray, what is your name?' 'Bollain,' she replied. 'My daughter,' said Saint Francis, 'flax (*lin*)

⁵ See Année Sainte, Vol. I, pp. 360 and foll. vol. III.—0

is a little seed that multiplies very quickly; you should resemble it, in that respect, when planted in the soil of the religious life in which I promise you a place.' She took such good root in this soil that she deserved to be called 'a chosen soul,' 'a real treasure of virtue.'

Her term of office was remarkable for three things : first, the establishment of a branch-house at Mans (1634); second, the hospitality she extended for eight months to the community of Metz who had been driven from that city by the wars (1635–1636) and lastly, by the visit of Saint Chantal to Paris. The foundress took pleasure in bearing witness to the fact that, under Saint Vincent's spiritual guidance, the Sisters lived in great simplicity and a sovereign contempt of the world, indifferent to all news from outside, 'without artifice or guile,' obedient both in heart and mind, and perfectly united. She added : 'I have seen nothing so pleasing as the union that exists between the two Mothers ; it is perfect, devoid of pretence or affectation, a real union in word and deed.'

In 1636 Mother Lhuillier was again elected Superior. At this time there was a great deal of talk about the cases of diabolical possession at Loudun, and almost everywhere popular imagination ran riot. It was whispered that the demons had promised to pay a visit to the Convent of the Capuchin nuns and to the first monastery of the Visitation. One day as Matins were about to begin a young Sister lost her mental balance; she thought she saw robbers drawing their swords on the terrace opposite the windows in the choir. Her state of excitement affected another Sister who stood near and who imagined she heard a loud noise. They began to cry aloud in their terror and at that there was a general stampede; only the Mother Assistant and another Sister remained calm and continued to recite the office. Saint Chantal, who happened to be in the convent, was engaged with Mother Lhuillier when the terror-stricken Sisters ran in to her for refuge, shouting : 'Thieves, thieves.' The Foundress led them back to the choir and recited Matins with the community. The story went round that just at that moment the possessed nuns at Loudon manifested boisterous mirth, bursting into fits of loud laughter and

crying : 'Ah ! how fast they run.'⁶ But this no doubt, like so many other marvellous facts attributed to these famous victims of possession, is nothing but a baseless legend.

The devil was not quite so satisfied to see the nuns running even more quickly in the path of perfection, under the guidance of their Father Superior, and by the mere force of their example, snatching from the world some chosen souls whose minds were more preoccupied with their eternal salvation than with earthly honours. The entry of Louise Angélique de la Fayette⁷ into the Visitation Order caused the greatest sensation.

Beauty, modesty, gentleness, piety, a gracious and noble simplicity, a lively and penetrating mind, a clear and solid judgement, a tender and devoted heart, were all to be found in this young girl who, at the age of fourteen, became a Maid of Honour to Oueen Anne of Austria. As she grew older and more beautiful all eyes were turned towards her and she attracted the attention of Louis XIII who frequently visited the Queen's apartments in the hope of meeting her whom he loved. His passion did not pass unperceived, and Mademoiselle de la Fayette, then seventeen years of age, soon had the whole Court at her feet and had praise, homage and flattery showered on her in abundance. She saw the danger, took every precaution in her power, and to make assurance doubly sure, she resolved to become a nun. Louis XIII heard of this and prevented her.

Richelieu was far too jealous of his personal influence over the King to brook that of a rival. He was determined to remove from Court the girl whose presence interfered with his plans, and he believed he could easily succeed through the agency of her confessor, the Dominican Father Carré, and the King's confessor, the Jesuit Father Caussin. He suggested to the former that he should draw his penitent's attention to the obligation of every Christian to follow a divine vocation, above all in such a serious matter as a call to the religious life; and to the latter, that he should point out to the King what a grievous sin it would be to contend against the King of Heaven for a soul that desired to sanctify

⁶ Année Sainte, Vol. III, pp. 85-86. ⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 2. and foll.

itself in the cloister. Richelieu did not see Father Caussin himself; he made use of an emissary, M. de Noyers, Secretary of State for War. The interview took place at night in the Palace at Saint-Germain-en-Laye; the Cardinal's delegate did not say who had sent him, but the Jesuit had no difficulty in guessing. De Noyers threw out a series of hints and traced an unflattering portrait of Mademoiselle de la Fayette, 'a sly girl' and a mere instrument in the hands of those 'anxious to cause trouble in the State.' Caussin was astute; he said he would speak to the King on the matter according to God and according to reason, and with that De Noyers departed content.

Louis XIII and Father Caussin met the following day, and in the course of a conversation outside confession, Mademoiselle de la Fayette was mentioned. The King spoke of the harmless pleasure that her society afforded him and of his fear lest he should not enjoy it much longer as he knew how strongly she felt attracted to the cloister. 'Such moderation,' wrote the Jesuit, ' filled me with tender compassion for this good prince whom some wished to deprive of such a reasonable friendship. "Good Heavens !" I said to myself in my heart, "is it not enough to have deprived him of his mother, to have ruined his wife's confidence and extinguished his brother's love for him? Must the innocent lamb also be snatched from the bosom of her shepherd?" I frankly told His Majesty that I saw no danger in his affection and that he might maintain it in its present state, and that if the girl spoke seriously to him of the religious life, he should seriously examine her vocation before giving her permission to follow it.'8 As soon as Mademoiselle de la Favette heard of Richelieu's hostility towards her, she felt her desire for the cloister diminish. The attraction of divine grace was less-

⁸ Une vocation et une disgrâce à la cour de Louis XIII (an unpublished letter from Père Caussin to Mlle de la Fayette, Paris, Brunet, 1861, in-18). Taken from the Études de théologie, de philosophie et d'histoire, published by the Jesuit Fathers, Daniel and Gagarin, Paris, 1861, in-8°, pp. 353-395. A manuscript copy of this letter is in the Municipal Library at Troyes; other copies may be found in the Municipal Library at Aix and at the Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris (mss. 2283 and 2536). ened by a desire to prevent a man who hated her from winning too easy a victory. Richelieu, in this instance, showed himself a bad psychologist. The young girl had no desire to be, or to appear, a victim of the formidable minister, but she had even less wish to expose her soul to danger, and it was this that she was determined to avoid when the danger appeared to be drawing near.

It would have been surprising if the King's passion, fostered as it was by the daily sight of the girl and by conversations with her, had not become a danger to both. Towards the end of April 1637, he offered her an apartment at Versailles, saying : 'There you will have to depend only on me and I can easily provide for you.' On the following day, as Father Caussin was entering the Chapel of the Castle of Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle de la Fayette approached and asked for an interview. He requested her to return in the afternoon, as he wished to consult the King before speaking to her.

'Sire,' said he to Louis XIII when they met, 'one of the Queen's Maids of Honour has asked to speak with me.'

'It is la Fayette,' said the King, 'she wishes to speak to you about her idea of becoming a nun. Examine her carefully and then come and tell me the result of your interview.'

In the afternoon Mademoiselle de la Favette returned, accompanied by the assistant governess of the Queen's Maids of Honour. After speaking to Father Caussin of her aspirations for the cloister, she added : 'I beseech you, Father, to obtain the King's consent.' 'Do you really intend,' he replied, ' to leave the world, the Court, a King who loves you, and all your brilliant hopes for the future, to take the veil and bury yourself alive within four walls? You do not know what it means to renounce your own judgement, to abandon your own will and to live at the bidding of persons whom you do not know, who may perhaps be disagreeable and who will not allow you to dispose of as much as a pin without their consent. Here at Court you have been hitherto like one of those Indian birds that are fed on amber and cinnamon; you have met with nothing but praise, compliments, admiration and kindness; you

will be very much surprised when a heavy cross is laid on your shoulders and you are made walk to Calvary more quickly perhaps than you would wish. Here, thanks to the confidence with which the King honours you, it is easy for you to be helpful to those in misfortune, to repair acts of injustice and to protect religion. It is God's will that you are at Court ; remain here.'

Mademoiselle de la Fayette was not convinced; she replied: 'My vocation, Father, does not date from yesterday; for years past I have desired to give myself to God, and even when I was a child I thought of doing so. I shall have no rest until I am in the cloister. The difficulties I experience in realising my design do not make the slightest impression on me, for I have a very definite feeling that God will bring me to the place to which He has called me. If I wait to leave the world until the world has left me, I shall not have very much merit; I far prefer to do from virtuous motives, in the flower of my age and in the King's favour, what others do from necessity.'

The Jesuit found it hard to hide his emotion but he went on: 'Do not,' he said, 'conceal the motives that have led you to arrive at such a resolution. Perhaps you have suffered some disappointment? Perhaps the King has refused you a favour on which you had set your heart?'

'Father,' said Mademoiselle de la Fayette, 'pray believe me when I tell you that I do not at all feel as you suggest. The King is so kind that he anticipates my every wish or rather what he thinks are my wishes. How often has he not told me that, if I intended to marry, he would select an excellent husband for me. Moreover, I never asked him for anything for myself or for any of my relations.'

Father Caussin persisted: 'Perhaps the slights and secret jealousies which the King's friendship for you have aroused may have had something to do with your design?'

'God forbid,' she replied. 'If I had wished to be a slave, Fortune was stretching out its arms towards me, and as a King's favourite I have certainly been sought after. When I leave the world I shall have only one regret, that of knowing it is happy at my withdrawal.'

FIRST MONASTERY OF VISITATION ORDER 203

The priest then said : 'There are convents and convents. Have you made your choice?'

'Yes, Father,' she answered, 'my choice is made; I shall go to the Visitation.'

'You have also to consider your parents,' said the Jesuit. 'You are bound in such an important matter as this not to arrive at a definite conclusion without their consent.'

'I have thought of that,' Mademoiselle de la Fayette replied, 'but I beg you to ask before anything else for the consent of the King of whom I am a true daughter.'

'On the following day,' Father Caussin goes on to say, 'I was present at His Majesty's levée, and he was impatiently awaiting the result of our interview. As soon as he had finished his prayers, I approached and gave him a faithful account of all that had occurred. He listened with much satisfaction, but when I arrived at the conclusion, which was that he would be pleased to consent to Mademoiselle de la Fayette's departure, this good prince said to me, with tears in his eyes, the following words which I carefully noted : " It is true that she is very dear to me, but if God calls her to the religious life I will place no obstacle in her way, and if I knew that my presence was a hindrance, I should go to her this moment and tell her I would never see her again. Go to Madame de Sénecy, tell her of Mademoiselle de la Favette's design, and ask her, from me, to make every arrangement to have it carried out."

Madame de Séneçy was a relation of the girl, and when she saw Father Caussin she very prudently remarked : 'I have always had a great respect for religious vocations that are inspired from above, and I think Mademoiselle de la Fayette's is such, but she has a father and mother; I cannot dispose of her without their consent.'

Father Caussin could not resist the pleasure of giving Richelieu a piece of news that he knew would be to the Cardinal's liking. The First Minister listened at first with delight, but when he heard that they intended to wait for her parents' reply, his face clouded and he said nervously : 'Parents have nothing to say in such a matter ; has not Saint Jerome said that one must walk over the body of one's father to follow the standard of the cross ? It would be cruel to allow the King to languish any longer.' These words did not come very well from the man who had just torn his own niece from a Carmelite convent. 'I found it very difficult then,' the Jesuit goes on to say, ' to refrain from telling him that the Holy Spirit is not captured by salvoes of artillery, and that I had never been taught to sacrifice the interests of children to those of men, yet I restrained myself and pointed out that if I had been more urgent I might have endangered all. . . He said that I was right and that another means must be tried.'

This other means was Father Carré; Mademoiselle de la Fayette gladly listened to his exhortations on the advantages of the religious life and the duty of corresponding with a divine call, but when she realised that he was merely Richelieu's mouth-piece, his words no longer produced any effect. The King advised him to fall in with Father Caussin's view, that is to wait for a reply from her parents.

She had to wait a long time, not without cause, for her relations were afraid of displeasing the King if they consented, and of angering Richelieu if they refused.

The young girl, worn out by all these delays, asked Louis XIII for permission to go to Paris to see Mother Lhuillier, and also, no doubt, Saint Vincent. 'You could not have made a better choice,' said the King. 'The first monastery of the Visitation is regarded as the most regular in the capital. Go, but be back here before evening.'

Mademoiselle de la Fayette returned from Paris still more anxious to leave the world. She arranged her affairs and allowed a few days to go by; then, unable to hold out any longer, she begged Father Caussin to approach the King once more. On the following morning, May 19, the Jesuit was present at the royal levée and was granted an audience. At his first words Louis XIII felt his heart sink. 'Why is she in so great a hurry?' he asked. 'Request her to defer it for a few months; I will go to the Army and the separation will not be so hard.' Then, recollecting himself, he nobly said : 'Pay no attention to what I have just said. If I prevent her now and she loses her vocation, I shall regret it all my life. Nothing has ever cost me as much as what I am now doing ; but God must be obeyed. I give her per-

FIRST MONASTERY OF VISITATION ORDER 205

mission to go where her desires call her; she may leave whenever she pleases.' Mademoiselle de la Fayette was waiting impatiently for Caussin's return, and welcomed the King's reply with a delight that may easily be imagined. 'I think,' wrote the Jesuit, ' that on that day she borrowed the swiftness of lightning, for such an affair was never before so promptly arranged.' She was present at the Queen's levée ready to take her leave. 'After having the honour,' said she to Anne of Austria, ' of being one of your maids, I shall become a maid of Saint Mary; I could not choose another mistress without degradation,' and the Queen wept at her words. At this moment the King entered, his emotion quite visible in his countenance. Mademoiselle de la Fayette endeavoured to cheer him by remarking : 'But why weep, Sire, at what you have approved of, and why grieve at the accomplishment of God's will? Having been honoured by your good graces, what can I desire save to have those of God?' She recommended some deserving cases to the King, pointed out some acts of injustice to be repaired, begged forgiveness for the guilty and promised to remember him before God.

Despite the anguish of a separation which he might have prevented, Louis XIII did not go back on his word. 'Go,' he said, 'go where God has called you ; it is not for man to oppose the Divine Will. I could by my royal authority retain you at my Court and forbid every convent in the kingdom to admit you, but the religious life is so excellent that my conscience would one day reproach me for having turned you aside from so great a good.' The sacrifice was made, and, as Madame de Motteville relates, Mademoiselle de la Fayette descended to her apartment, the windows of which overlooked the castle courtyard ; she saw the King enter his carriage and then a cry escaped from her lips : 'I shall never see him again !'

This momentary weakness did not shake her resolution ; a carriage was ready, which she entered, accompanied by some of the Queen's maids of honour and their chaperone, and the party drove away. Her gaiety contrasted with the sadness of her companions the whole length of the journey, and, writes Father Caussin, 'one would have imagined that her

companions were victims whom she was leading to the sacrifice.' When she entered the convent in the Rue Saint-Antoine, her heart overflowed with joy; her long-felt wishes were at last satisfied.

The devout postulant was nineteen years old; she made her sacrifice generously, but we know from her own admissions that at times her happiness was tinged with a little bitterness when she thought, first, that Richelieu was delighted at her withdrawal from Court, and second, that her parents had done nothing to prevent her from entering the cloister. She would have wished her parents to have offered some show of resistance, not indeed to delay her entrance into the religious life, but as a proof of their affection for her.

The news of this event passed from lip to lip and was a topic of general conversation, some saying that the girl would never persevere. The Queen, curious to gather first impressions, paid a visit to the convent a few days later, accompanied by some of the ladies of the Court. Mademoiselle de la Fayette went to meet them dressed in her ordinary clothes; 'her hair was concealed beneath a bonnet, a sort of linen kerchief was crossed over her neck, and the sleeves of her dress were gathered into cuffs which encircled her wrists; she wore a close-fitting, unpadded skirt, contrary to the fashion of the day. When the Queen and the ladies saw her thus dressed they could not restrain their feelings. One of her friends whispered in her ear: 'My dear, are you mad to dress like this?' to which she replied: 'I thought I bequeathed madness to the world when I left it.'

The Queen's example became contagious; everyone wished to see the young nun. Saint Vincent, though opposed in principle to persons visiting convent parlours, offered no objection on this occasion, as he believed that more edification than inconvenience would result. Richelieu, however, was on the watch; he felt offended and gave orders that all visits should cease on the pretext that life in the cloister, if it is to prove sanctifying, demands isolation from the world. After several weeks of probation, Mademoiselle de la Fayette was judged worthy to receive the habit, and then the old difficulties started all over again. 'When there was question of giving it to you,' wrote Caussin to her afterwards, 'you were like a victim with the knife at its throat which nobody wishes to sacrifice. The King did not wish to hear about it, saying that it was not his business to make girls members of religious Orders. The Cardinal, whose duty it was to carry out the ceremony, after he had bargained for the victim, washed his hands of the whole affair. Madame de Séneçy said she could do nothing without your parents' consent ; your Mother Superior had to take up the axe to consummate the sacrifice and I preached the funeral sermon.'

When Louis XIII heard of the ceremony, he felt his courage fail him; he wrote to Mother Lhuillier to say he was about to pay them a visit. At the day and hour appointed he arrived at the convent after making several détours in the streets of Paris to escape from those who had the curiosity to follow him. Mother Lhuillier and Sister Louise Angélique were waiting for him in the parlour behind the grille. She said to the King : 'Sire, Your Majesty has the right to enter the convent ; do you wish that the interview should take place in an inner room or here?' 'It is better to see her here,' said the King. Mother Lhuillier then told him of how the novice was progressing in the spiritual life and added : 'Sire, I leave her in all confidence at Your Majesty's discretion.' 'Do not be afraid,' was the reply, 'I did not come here to turn her away from her good design.' The Reverend Mother moved from the grille and the noblemen and officers of the King's suite withdrew a The ensuing conversation was strictly short distance. private; not a word was overheard, but it could be seen that tears and smiles were mingled. When the interview was over, the King said he was delighted with Mademoiselle de la Fayette and so enchanted with Mother Lhuillier that 'he would gladly embrace the religious life if it was not his duty to govern the Kingdom.'

When Richelieu learned of the King's visit, he was very much annoyed and immediately sent for Father Caussin.

'I am very much astonished,' he remarked, 'that the King has kept this visit secret from me. It has caused a good deal of commotion; people think it may have important results and my friends have come to me and offered to defend me at the peril of their life.'

'But, My Lord,' said Caussin, 'what is there to be afraid of? Mademoiselle de la Fayette is only a child.'

'You are not an evil-minded man,' said the Cardinal, pressing his hand, 'I shall have to teach you the wickedness of the world; it is just as well that you should know this child has been thinking of spoiling all my plans.'

The ceremony of taking the habit attracted a large number of courtiers; the Queen also was present, and we are told that her Maid of Honour, Madame de Hautefort, whose beauty was so soon to win the King's heart, never ceased from looking at the sweet and recollected countenance of the novice.

Louis XIII paid her some more visits, especially during the five months following on the taking of the habit, and always in the same way. He came expressly from Fontainebleau and returned after some hours in the parlour where the usual topic of conversation was Christian piety. Sister Louise Angélique sometimes spoke to the King about peace throughout the Christian world, on the wretchedness of the poor and of union in the royal family. She strove in particular to inspire him with a holy and cordial affection for his Queen, for she always hoped that God would bless their marriage. Allusions to Richelieu's policy were at times fairly transparent, but the Cardinal's name was scarcely ever mentioned. Louis XIII, as a matter of fact, did not wish to hear his Minister's actions criticised, although he himself was not over-particular in that respect. On one occasion the novice forgot herself; the King stood up abruptly and walked out without saying a word. Scarcely had he put his foot within the palace than the thought that he had hurt Sister Louise Angélique filled his heart with bitterness; he asked Father Caussin to go at once and present his excuses to the Sister and to assure her that it would not be long until she saw him again.

Early in December 1637, Louis XIII left Versailles for Saint-Maur, passing through Paris on his way; he called at the Visitation convent and during his conversation with Sister Louise a violent storm broke out. The rain continued

FIRST MONASTERY OF VISITATION ORDER 209

for such a length of time that at the novice's suggestion, he gave up the idea of going to Saint-Maur and went to the Queen who was then in the Louvre. Nine months later, almost to the day, Paris learned of the birth of him who was subsequently known to history as Louis XIV of France.

Richelieu still continued to regard with no friendly eve the royal visits to the monastery in the Rue Saint-Antoine. Father Caussin, he thought, was bound in conscience to forbid them to his royal penitent. On October 10, 1637, the Jesuit received sealed letters banishing him to Rennes and was absolutely forbidden to hold communication with anyone whomsoever before he arrived in that city. Six months later he received another letter ordering him to go to Quimper-Corentin in the heart of Brittany, where he remained until after the death of Louis XIII. The redoubtable minister also conceived the idea of banishing Sister Louise and Mother Lhuillier, but the King heard of it and was very angry. 'If Mademoiselle de la Fayette were in the depths of Auvergne,' he exclaimed, ' I could easily tear her out of the hands of the Cardinal and all the devils.' Richelieu was in fact not thinking of a convent in France but of the Visitation monastery at Annecy. The fear of appearing ridiculous was the only thing that restrained him : his enemies would have most certainly repeated everywhere that the great man was afraid of a young nun.

Sister Louise made her profession at the end of 1638 in presence of the Oueen and of the Ladies of the Court. Louis XIII afterwards continued to visit her, but not so frequently as before, for the flame of passion was not burning so brightly in his heart, perhaps because the charms of Madame de Hautefort had enkindled another. The young nun was accustomed to send him little gifts of objects of piety, which he gladly received and kept as precious souvenirs. The King, for his part, was generous to the house in which Mademoiselle de la Fayette resided. The 12,000 livres which he used to present to the Maids of Honour at the end of their period of service were sent to the first monastery of the Visitation after Sister Louise had made her profession. Again, the Sisters wished to enlarge the convent and the only means of doing so was to build on some land belonging to

the Marshal de Créqui, Duke of Lesdiguières. They had attempted to purchase it, but in vain; the Marquis obstinately refused to sell. 'Even if you were to cover it with *pistoles*,' he said, 'I would not sell it to you.' Mother Lhuillier and Sister Louise mentioned this fact to Louis XIII.

On the following morning, the Marshal was present at the King's levée; Louis observed him and said: 'I should like to speak with you; wait a moment in my study and I shall be with you immediately.'

The Marquis obeyed and when the King entered he said : ' Marshal, I want you to do me a favour.'

'Sire,' replied de Créqui, 'a man who has exposed his life so often for Your Majesty has nothing of which you are not master.'

'I only want,' said the King, 'a small piece of your garden and I wish you to sell just as much of it as you please to the ladies of Saint Mary, your neighbours. I will be their guarantor.'

'Sire,' replied the Marshal, 'my garden and mansion are at Your Majesty's disposal,' whereat the King embraced him.

'As these ladies,' added de Créqui, ' are entirely obliged to Your Majesty, I do not wish to accept anything from them.'

The King hastened to send the good news to the convent, and the Marshal caused a deed of conveyance to be drawn up, which he sent to Mademoiselle de la Fayette.

If it had depended solely on Louis XIII, the Sisters would have received the body of Saint Chantal which had been embalmed. As a matter of fact he offered it, but they declined in favour of the convent at Anneçy which had stronger claims to retain those sacred relics.

Queen Anne of Austria also was very kind to the nuns, and some months after the birth of the Dauphin, she paid them a visit and recommended the little prince to the prayers of Sister Louise. After the death of Louis XIII, she returned, accompanied by her two children. The Sisters were gathered in the Chapter-room to kiss her hands and did not venture to raise their eyes. 'Mother,' said the



SAINT JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL

Queen to the Superioress, 'tell your Sisters not to mortify themselves and to look at the King.' Sister Louise was asked not only to look at but kiss the child. Whilst her lips were touching his cheeks, the Queen said : 'Love this dear, good nun, because I am under great obligations to her.' The King and his brother then went out to play in the garden, whilst the Queen and Sister Louise had a long private conversation. On the following day, the nun received a portrait of the little King.

Anne of Austria enjoyed the society of nuns. Whenever she visited a convent the Sisters sat round her and went on with their work in which their august visitor shared. On one occasion she found them making artificial flowers and at once set to work; she was so pleased at the result that she returned the following day and the day after. She was also very fond of the bread baked in the convent, and one of her pages went every morning to the Rue Saint-Antoine for the Queen's bread which was often supplemented by delicious, crisp rolls brought by an extern Sister to the Louvre.

The happiness experienced by Anne of Austria in the society of nuns gave her an idea of building a sort of special convent for herself to which she could retire, in company with some chosen Ladies of Honour, to spend some time in peace and recollection, far from the turmoil of the Court. She thought of putting the Sisters of the Visitation in charge of this convent and of appointing Mother Lhuillier Superioress, but when the Queen mentioned it, the nun said : 'I very humbly thank Your Majesty, but I shall take the liberty of informing Your Majesty that the great ladies who will accompany you would not care for our simple mode of life. Nothing would suit them better than an abbey where the divine office is celebrated with pomp and magnificence.' The Queen agreed ; she completed the buildings at Val-de-Grâce and induced the King to lay the foundation stone in 1645 of a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. She invited the Benedictine nuns in Bièvre to take charge of the new monastery, and acquired a habit of withdrawing there to acquit herself of her duties to God and devote herself to the interests of her soul.

Her visits to the first monastery of the Visitation became

less frequent, but they never ceased entirely. She never failed to be present on the great feasts of the Order, and on December 28, the anniversary of the death of Saint Francis de Sales, she sent her own musicians there to enhance the splendour of the ceremonies. No one was more anxious than she to see the Beatification of the great prelate ; she wrote to the Pope to that effect, and contributed 2,000 crowns to the expenses of the process.

The first monastery of the Visitation enjoyed such a high reputation at Court that great ladies, illustrious by their birth or position, regarded it as an honour to be allowed to make a more or less prolonged stay in the convent. The Princesse de Nemours and the Duchesse de Mazarin⁹ frequently went there and Madame de Hautefort withdrew to this convent in 1644, after she had lost the royal favour for the second time.¹⁰

The great reputation of the convent was bound to attract postulants who arrived in such numbers that Saint Vincent was able to send Sisters to Saint-Denis in 1639 and to Bayonne in 1640 to open monasteries in these two cities.

A new Mother Superior had to be elected in 1641, and on May 16 Louise Eugénie de Fonteines was chosen. Saint Vincent, who had seen the Sister deal with several difficult situations, said that 'an angel could not have acted with greater virtue.' In 1644 Mother de Fonteines was succeeded by Mother Lhuillier, a former Superioress, who established a convent at Compiègne during her second period of office, which she was unable to complete owing to ill-health.

In 1649 Mother de Fonteines was again chosen Superior and her good qualities were so well appreciated by her companions that she held this position for thirty-three years notwithstanding the interruptions prescribed by the Constitutions. In 1651 she had to submit to two great sacrifices, the loss of Mother Lhuillier and of Sister Louise, who were sent to Chaillot, near Paris, to establish a new house.

This new monastery was founded by Louis XIV's own aunt, Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I of England. The devout Queen, driven from England by the revolution of

⁹ Année Sainte, Vol. VII, p. 733.

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 14.

1644, had found an asylum with the Carmelite nuns, but as regular observance suffered from her presence and that of the ladies of her suite, she left it with the intention of founding a monastery to which she could retire. Mother Lhuillier at that time was waiting for a benefactress whose charity would enable her to open a third monastery of the Visitation in Paris, and as Madame de Motteville was aware of the circumstances, she brought the Queen and the Reverend Mother together. Henrietta Maria had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to Saint Francis de Sales whose Introduction to a devout life she had read and enjoyed. Madame de Motteville's suggestion appealed to her, and on October 3, 1650, she paid a visit to the nuns in the Rue Saint-Antoine. She left the convent edified by their modesty and humility and filled with admiration for Mother Lhuillier and Sister Louise. She returned during Holy Week of 1651 and staved in the convent for some days when Saint Vincent met her to arrange certain details in the foundation contract. The Queen selected the house of Marshal de Bassompierre at Chaillot, in the suburbs of Paris. This mansion, built by Catherine de Médici as a hermitage for herself, stood on a hill amidst meadows and gardens, ornamented with terraces and fountains. The nuns thought the property too beautiful, but they submitted when they were reminded that the Oueen needed a pleasant retreat to soothe her sorrows. When the day arrived for the departure to Chaillot, Saint Vincent went to the Rue Saint-Antoine; he appointed Mother Lhuillier Superioress; Sister Louise, Assistant; Sister Mary Elisabeth de la Sourdière. Directress : other members of the new community were Mary Pauline Hamilton, of the royal house of Stuart; Madeline Eugénie Bertaut, a novice and a sister of Madame de Motteville ; and four other nuns.11

Chaillot, like other places in the suburbs of Paris, suffered during the troubled days of the Fronde. The Sisters had everything to fear from the passage of the various armies, and accordingly withdrew to the first monastery in Paris where the Visitandines of Saint-Denis and Meaux were also afforded hospitality. 'Every time a community arrived,'

¹¹ Année Sainte, Vol. III, p. 572 ; Vol. IV, pp. 20-21. VOL. III.—P

we read in the Annals of the Order, 'the Sisters in the Paris house went to meet them at the door of the cloister; they embraced the newcomers protesting that as long as they had a crust of bread they would divide it together. Each Sister hastened to make the beds for the new arrivals and to furnish them with all that was needed.

'The public was much edified by this, and said that in these unfortunate times, when nuns in need of an asylum might be seen wandering about in all directions, the Daughters of Saint Mary were not in such a plight because they gave each other hospitality. A thousand blessings were called down on our holy founder for having established an Order so replete with charity, and all wished to have a daughter or a relation with us. Every evening the confessor brought a ciborium which he placed in a crevice concealed in the wall of the little infirmary chapel, and the courage of the Sisters was sustained in the midst of the dangers that surrounded them by the thought that the Blessed Sacrament was near them.'

The Sisters of Chaillot remained in the Rue Saint-Antoine for two months and a half; those of Saint-Denis for five months, and those of Meaux for eleven. Religious observance did not suffer in the slightest from the presence of such large numbers, which mounted up to two hundred when things were at their worst. Mother de Fonteines secured order in every department. 'Each community chanted the office separately at the sound of the bell so that the praises of God resounded throughout the whole house. On Sunday and feast-days all met together in the garden for recreation, when the time was spent in a holy and innocent gaiety.'

Saint Vincent was never tired of admiring the spirit of peace and charity that existed in the convent and was especially charmed by the profound silence that reigned throughout the house.¹²

In 1655 Madeline Elisabeth de Maupeou succeeded Mother de Fonteines whose family was closely linked with the first monastery, for four of her nieces were members of that community, and the body of her brother-in-law, M.

¹² Année Sainte, Vol. IV, pp. 24-25.

FIRST MONASTERY OF VISITATION ORDER 215

Fouquet, reposed in the vaults of the church. Nicholas Fouquet, the celebrated Minister of Finance, desired a similar privilege for himself and his children ; he prepared the rough draft of a contract in which his right was recognised ' to place his arms and his epitaph in whatever parts of the church he might select.' Saint Vincent objected to this clause. It was all very well for the Minister to make this arrangement for the chapel in which he was to be buried ; that seemed perfectly natural to the Saint, but other chapels had their own founders ; for instance, the de Souscarrière or the de Coulange family could not be legitimately deprived of their right, and at the wish of Commander de Sillery, a chapel was to be dedicated later on to the holy Bishop of Geneva. The terms of the contract were too wide, and so Saint Vincent submitted amendments; a second draft was presented, but as sufficient account had not been taken of his annotations, he rejected that also. A third followed, but he had then grown tired of this chicanery and wrote a letter of disapproval to Mother Maupeou couched in such terms that no one could fail to grasp his meaning : ' Perhaps,' he wrote in the course of his letter, 'your Daughters might be regarded as excusable in the sight of God, if they had transacted business in accordance with the first drafts, but I most certainly should not, if I had consented to them, for I know, as I am bound to know, that nothing must be done that is not according to justice and right order.'13

When Mother de Maupeou's period of office had expired, Mother de Fonteines was re-elected and held office until 1664.

As Saint Vincent died in 1660 we shall not continue the history of the first monastery. Much might be said about the edification given by the nuns whom he had trained, but that would lead us too far away from our subject. We have given some of their names, and to these we may add, Marie-Genevièye de Furnes, the first Superioress of the monastery at Meaux;¹⁴ Frances Catharine de Saint Yon, who died in

¹³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 558.

¹⁴ See an account of her in the Année Sainte des religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie, Annecy, 1871, 12 vols. quarto, Vol. III, pp. 78 and foll.

the odour of sanctity at the age of twenty-two;¹⁵ Claude Frances Machecop, widow of M. Bouthillier, mother of a Minister of Finance, two bishops and four nuns, grandmother of a Visitandine, friend of Marie de Médici's who honoured her by assisting at her profession, and of Princess Marie. afterwards Queen of Poland, who paid her a visit before her death which occurred on February 2, 1630, in the seventyninth year of her age and the third of her religious profession ;¹⁶ Marie Claudine de Pincé, sickly and deformed, but beautiful with the beauty that is the fruit of virtue ;¹⁷ Anne Louise de Verdelot, daughter of Baron de Verdelot, mistress of novices, assistant-Superioress and subsequently Superioress of the convent at Mans to which she could not proceed owing to an illness that proved mortal;¹⁸ Catherine Agnès Le Sage, the recipient of special heavenly favours, her mother, Marie Angélique Le Masson, widow of the King's physician ;¹⁹ Marie Louise Goureau de la Proutière ; Marie Charlotte d'Amours, daughter of a Councillor of State ; Frances Antoinette de Soyecourt, daughter of the Marquis de Soyecourt and grand-daughter of de Roissy, Dean of the Council of State. 20

Mother de Chaugy and the Année Sainte of the Visitation Order have preserved for us the memory of beautiful examples of virtue given by these devout Sisters and by many others. Saint Vincent was their Superior and consequently their spiritual guide and councillor. Their praises are his as are those of the holy souls who served God in the Convent of Saint Mary Magdalen and in other houses of the Order in Paris and in Saint-Denis.

¹⁵ See an account of her in the Année Sainte, Vol. IX, p. 676.

¹⁶ See an account of her in Vies des VIII vénérables veuves religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie, par la M. de Chaugy, Anneçy, 1659, in-4°, pp. 63 and foll.

¹⁷ See an account of her in Vies des IX religieuses de l'Ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie, par la M. de Chaugy, Annecy, 1659, in-f°., pp. 307 and foll. ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 173 and foll.

¹⁹ Année Sainte, Vol. V, p. 884.

²⁰ See accounts of the three last nuns in Année Sainte, Vol. V, pp. 646 and foll; pp. 541 and foll; Vol. III, p. 24 and foll.

CHAPTER LIV

THE MONASTERY OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN¹

HE first monastery of the Visitation had also a branch establishment, for some of its nuns were sent to take charge of the Convent of Saint Mary Magdalen where fallen women found a favourable asylum in which to expiate their sins by a regular life of devotion and penance. When the Visitation Order took over this work in 1629 it had already been in existence for eleven years; Father Athanasius, a Capuchin and a brother of President Molé, M. de Montry, a wealthy Paris merchant, and M. du Fresne, Archer of the King's Guard, had brought it into existence.

It began in a very modest way in August 1618, when two penitent women were given hospitality by Geneviève Poulin in the Faubourg-Saint-Germain. From here, where they remained only eight days, they went to a house close to the Porte-Saint-Honoré, the property of a woman named Chaillou, who, like a real mother, provided for all their comfort and spiritual needs for three months. Two other penitents were added to the first, and Saint Vincent, who was then chaplain to the de Gondis, often went to exhort them to persevere. The flight of one of the girls, who yielded to the solicitations of her lover, was taken so keenly to heart by their charitable guardian that she asked de Montry to remove the other three. On July 21, 1618, de Montry presented the penitents with his own house, which

¹ Works to be consulted on this subject are : La relation véritable de la naissance et progrès du monastère de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine, par De Montry, Paris, 1649, in-24; Année Sainte, Vol. I, pp. 361 and foll. These two works are complementary, for the first begins where the second left off, in 1629: several registers in the National Archives give interesting details, namely, S 4740, LL 1,689 (Actes capitulaires) and L 1,692 (Constitutions). was known as the Red Cross, and went to live in an adjacent one which he purchased. He devoted himself to the work with great unselfishness, discretion and prudence, and even went so far as to take his meals for fifteen days with his guests, always accompanied by M. du Fresne to give no ground for suspicion. Amongst other benefactors of the work, Madame de Gondi deserves special mention; she sent them blue beds.

Gradually the number of penitents increased ; some came in response to good advice that had been given them, others when they had lost their all or to revenge themselves on those who had deceived them. On January 22, 1619, the number had reached fifteen. The Jesuit Fathers offered to help, and it was to their chapel that the girls were taken to assist at religious services, whilst the work of transforming a stable into a chapel was going on at de Montholon's expense. The chapel was small and poor ; a few simple ornaments and pictures hanging to the walls gave it the appearance of an oratory. Altar vestments were lent or presented ; one of the penitents gave her violet camlet skirt to have a chasuble made from it. On August 25, 1618, the Feast of Saint Louis, a priest came to celebrate Mass for the first time.

De Montry and du Fresne decided that the penitents should be called 'daughters of Saint Magdalen,' should have their hair cut, go bare-footed and wear a hair-shirt instead of a chemise. The most important point to be settled was whether they should be free to leave the house and receive visitors, for their perseverance depended on their relations with outsiders. De Montry believed that enclosure was necessary, but did not wish to establish it without the girls' consent. He accordingly consulted them and they all replied that they wished to have a grille; their petition was granted, and a charitable lady, Madame de Sainte-Beuve, presented them with one. The girls were free to leave the house, but if they did so, they were not allowed to return. One of them went out for a walk in the city one day and on returning home she found the door shut ; she knocked and kept on knocking until the passersby stopped and formed a crowd which took her side ; they threatened to set fire to the house and to murder de Montry.

MONASTERY OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN 219

Debauchees came to claim their former mistresses; sometimes individuals, sometimes groups of gentlemen or students; they tried to force the gates, collected crowds, excited the people, protested that the girls within were some of the loveliest in Paris and had been shut up by order of some high dignitaries of the Church for no worthy motives. The people were easily deceived, and on one occasion more than four hundred gathered in front of the house; the police were informed and dispersed the crowd just when some of its most excited members were about to set fire to the wood and hay they had piled up against the door.

Molé, the Procurator General, loved and protected the work which, thanks to his efforts, never had to suffer from the malevolence of those whose evil instincts it impeded. He and his wife frequently visited the penitents ; other persons of note followed his example, of whom the most illustrious was Queen Marie de Médici. She arrived accompanied by her Maids and Ladies of Honour ; caressed the penitents, congratulated them on having abandoned their disorderly life, and begged them to continue in the straight path. The Maids of Honour had a meal with the 'Madelonnettes' after collecting with the latter the materials for the salads that were served at the meal.

When de Montry had observed the fervour shown by some of the penitents, the idea occurred to him that a community of nuns might be established, with the approbation of the ecclesiastical authorities, in the house itself. Three of the inmates received the habit from Saint Francis de Sales on July 22, 1619, the feast of Saint Mary Magdalen, and were supplied with motives to persevere in their good resolutions by the beautiful sermon he then preached. It was a magnificent ceremony ; crowds filled the house and out-offices and overflowed into the surrounding streets.

The difficulties that lay ahead of the new community could easily be foreseen. Many regretted that the work had not been placed under the direction of nuns who had already been trained in the religious life; others wished the holy Bishop of Geneva to lend some of his own spiritual Daughters, but Saint Francis preferred to wait. 'The time has not yet come to attempt this particular work,' he said, 'the fruit is not yet ripe'; and on another occasion: 'Leave it to time; this house of Saint Mary Magdalen will be a far greater success than people think.' The first girl received by Saint Francis de Sales was Anne l'Espicier; she was appointed Superioress, and the next day five young men arrived at the convent, sword in hand, to carry her off. They climbed the wall, but chancing to meet a penitent who said: 'What do you want?' they were taken aback, left by the way they had entered, and never appeared again.

De Montry was soon grieved at the loss of du Fresne who had hitherto shared his responsibilities. It was whilst visiting galley-slaves in Paris, to whom he charitably devoted part of his time, that du Fresne met his tragic death, for one of them drove a sword into his throat. His widow continued his work for the penitents and remained Directress until the Comtesse de Saint-Paul, the Marquise de Maignelay, Mademoiselle de Sainte-Beuve, Madame President Aubry, Madame Gancin and other generous ladies, secured a larger building for them in the Rue des Fontaines, near the Temple, in the Parish of Saint Nicholas in the Fields. The Superior of the Sisters was the parish priest, John Dupont, and their confessor M. Guichard. The work subsisted on an annual grant of 3,000 livres given by Louis XIII and on the donations of the charitable. Some ladies defrayed the expenses of one or more of the penitents; Madame de Maignelay, for instance, paid for four or five, and in addition she charitably purchased the house for them on July 16, 1620.

The need of some alteration of the constitutions of the new society was recognised by all. Anne l'Espicier's want of experience and incapacity rendered her wholly unfit for the office of Superior; she neither knew how to anticipate breaches of the rules nor how to apply suitable remedies. The parish priest of Saint Nicholas in the Fields begged the Archbishop of Paris to ask Mother Lhuillier for some of her nuns to take charge of Saint Mary Magdalen's.² Although Saint Vincent supported the request, yet, as it was an exceptionally grave matter, the Mother Superior also wished to have Saint Chantal's opinion. The reply was favourable.

² Abelly, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 329.

MONASTERY OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN 221

'The gentle sweetness of our Institute,' said the Foundress, 'can suffer no other chains than those of holy love which should keep us in the true Christian liberty of the perfect children of God.' Nothing now remained but to select five Sisters for the foundation. Sister Bollain was appointed Superioress; Sister Mary Simon Tollue, Assistant and Mistress of Novices;³ Sister Langlois, Bursar; Sister de Chabane, Portress; and Sister Le Brun, an Out-Sister, to take charge of the pantry. Saint Vincent asked them all to prepare for their new duties by a retreat, and suggested that on the fourth and succeeding days they should meditate on all that Jesus Christ had done for the conversion of sinners and especially for the conversion of Saint Mary Magdalen, the woman taken in adultery, Zaccheus and Saint Mathew.

The date of departure was fixed for July 21, 1629; the Archbishop of Paris called in person to take Sister Bollain and her four companions to the Rue des Fontaines. The Mother Superior of the first monastery, the Comtesse de Saint-Paul, the Marquise de Maignelay and other lady friends of the Order also accompanied the little band. Fifty penitents were waiting for them, and the Sisters were led to the choir whilst a *Te Deum* was chanted; they then moved on to the Chapter-room where the Archbishop installed the new Mother Superior, appointed the nuns to their various offices and recommended them to be obedient. At Sister Bollain's request, Mother Lhuillier sent two other Sisters, of whose names only one has come down to us, Marie Alorges.⁴

On August 29 a novitiate was begun; twelve of the senior penitents, as well as some recent arrivals, entered it; they solemnly took the habit, renounced all things contrary to religious simplicity and placed whatever they possessed in common.

Saint Vincent, with Leblanc, the Vicar General of Paris, the parish priest of Saint Nicholas in the Fields and Mother Bollain, had the chief part in drafting the Constitutions,

⁸ See a notice of her in Vies des IX religieuses de l'Ordre de la Visitation Sainte Marie, Anneçy, 1659, in-f°., pp. 151 and foll. ⁴ See Année Sainte, Vol. II, pp. 349 and foll. for an account of

⁴ See Année Sainte, Vol. II, pp. 349 and foll. for an account of her.

which were approved by Urban VIII, in the first instance by a Brief and then by a Bull dated December 15, 1631. On more than one occasion he held meetings of doctors of divinity and other experienced persons to settle doubtful points and to smooth out difficulties.⁵ Penitents admitted to the religious community became real nuns; they had a two-years' novitiate, and those who distinguished themselves by their fervour were afterwards permitted to take solemn vows. The number of professed Sisters was, as a rule, about thirty.

The choice of a priest to act as Superior was very important. Sister Bollain proposed a man whom Saint Vincent thought he should not accept, as this priest's peremptory character might cause him to interfere with the rights of others, and, moreover, his delicate health and infirmities would have scarcely allowed him to carry out his duties thoroughly. The Saint advised her to wait : 'It is much better,' he wrote, 'to observe how things go on at first.'⁶ John Dupont continued to carry out his duties until 1632, when he was replaced by Charton, the penitentiary of Paris, whose place was afterwards taken by George Froger, Parish Priest of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet.

It proved easy to divide the 'Madelonnettes' into three classes : first, girls fully determined to persevere in the path of virtue : second, girls full of vanity, athirst for liberty, but, at the same time, good, docile and capable of making an effort; and finally, those only anxious to return to their former licentious mode of life. These three categories formed three distinct groups. The nuns were recruited from the first class and turned out better than anyone had ventured to hope; they were fervent and devout, and the Visitation nuns admitted that they saw very little difference between the novitiate at Saint Mary's and that at Saint Magdalen's. Thirty-five penitents died in the course of ten years, and all went straight to God 'on fire with divine love.' Girls of the second class, influenced by the example of the first, dressed modestly, only conversed with seculars from behind a grille, and mortified themselves at their meals. The remainder,

⁶ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 533.

⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 186.

after holding themselves in check for a month or two at first, out of fear and then out of admiration for the earthly angels who seemed to experience no human passions, gave free rein to their evil instincts. It was all in vain for Sisters to kneel down in front of the most obstinate and beg them to think of their eternal salvation ; all that they received in return were sneers and insults. Many ran away, intending to recommence their life of sin, whilst others behaved so badly that they had to be dismissed. Some spoke of killing the Sisters, and Sister Tollue, who slept in their dormitory, providentially escaped assassination ; she happened to discover in time the knife with which one of the women intended to cut her throat. And yet, even in this last category, there were some wonderful conversions.

The marvels of grace to be observed in the Convent of Saint Mary Magdalen became a general topic of conversation in Paris. Ladies of the highest rank asked to be allowed to have free access to the Convent for the sake of the edification they would receive there. The house became a centre of retreats for externs who felt the need of spending a few days in solitude and recollection.

Unfortunately many of the penitents failed to persevere ; even amongst the best nature gradually got the upper hand. In course of time the professed and non-professed gradually formed two hostile camps. 'The former,'7 wrote Saint Vincent in 1655, ' are self-sufficient ; they despise the latter and render themselves insupportable; and the latter have such an aversion from the others that they murmur and cry out against them when they commit the least fault ; the former, who are not virtuous enough to support the consequences of this aversion, in their turn cry out against the others, with the result that there is nothing but perpetual wrangling and disunion in this house. And were it not for the Daughters of Saint Mary, who are in charge, and who do everything in their power to preserve peace, this house would have been long ago swept out of existence. That is the reason they now only allow as few of these poor girls as they can to take vows, with the intention of entirely suppressing the custom if it prove possible.'

⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 322.

The Visitandines, worn out with the difficulties they encountered, made a preliminary step in 1639 for a return to the first monastery, and only remained at the Magdalen Asylum out of obedience ; but obedience did not prevent their hearts from grieving at the sight of the sad examples under their eyes. Sister Bollain suffered more perhaps than any of her companions, and Saint Vincent did his best to induce her to remain. On February 29, 1660, he wrote to her: 'The grace of perseverance is the most important of all ; it is the grace that crowns all the rest and a death that finds us with arms in our hands is the most glorious and desirable of all. Naturally, one wishes to die amongst one's own, in the midst of those who are near to us and in the arms of those we love ; all, however, do not yield to these tender feelings, but only such as are weak and effeminate. Our Lord willed to die as He had lived ; as His life had been hard and painful. His death was harsh and cruel, without the least tincture of human consolation. That is why many persons have had the consolation of loving to die alone, utterly forsaken by men, confident that God alone was their support.' Sister Bollain realised this truth and continued to carry her cross for another ten years, until she was needed to replace Mother de La Fayette who had died in the convent at Chaillot. Both as Mother Superior and as adviser to those who occupied her position, she rendered invaluable service to Saint Mary Magdalen's.

To difficulties of the moral order, to which we have just now alluded, were added those of a temporal kind for the usual number of penitents ranged between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and forty, and the annual grant of 3,000 livres, made by Louis XIII, was not sufficient to maintain such a large community. By careful administration Mother Bollain, Mother Alorges, and some other Superiors, managed to provide the community at least with the necessaries of life. Saint Vincent also succeeded in interesting wealthy benefactors in the work; the Marquise de Maignelay, up to the day of her death, defrayed the expenses of sixteen girls; she made arrangements that the chaplain, Stephen Guichard, Principal of the College of Burgundy, should receive a yearly stipend; she left 101,600

MONASTERY OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN 225

livres to the convent on the condition that the work should remain in the hands of the Visitation Order. Commander de Sillery likewise invested sums that brought in 1,600 livres a year for the maintenance of the Daughters of Saint Mary. Some ladies not only brought girls to the convent, but showed themselves practical benefactors by paying for their support.

The convent also received a considerable amount from legacies. Two men quested for alms every day. Famous orators preached charity sermons every month in the convent chapel on behalf of the work, and in these various ways from nineteen to twenty thousand livres were collected yearly. Thanks to careful management, the revenues increased year by year and had reached the sum of eighteen thousand livres in 1665 when Mother Bollain, after a sojourn of thirty-three years, only broken from 1633 to 1636, finally left the convent.

Her companions seconded her efforts with admirable devotedness.

Of the twenty-eight years which Mother Mary Martha Alorges spent among the penitents, seventeen were passed in the post of Mother Superior. Marie de Médicis, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, Saint Vincent, and all who knew her, were filled with admiration at the wealth of graces with which God had favoured her. The Marquise de Maignelay expressed the general feeling when she said : 'Sister Mary Martha Alorges deserves to have altars erected to her in her life-time.'

Sister Tollue was a model of patience ; she bore uncomplainingly countless acts of malice and ill-temper. On the day when the woman who had planned to murder her fled from the convent, she wept bitterly at the thought that she could no longer be of any assistance to the unfortunate creature. She died on May 29, 1630, assisted at her last moments by Saint Vincent, who said : 'Her victorious and triumphant spirit has ascended to the realms of glory in a chariot of fire and of love.' She had been in the service of the penitents for only two years.

Mary Monica Samier devoted thirty years of her life to her charges as Directress of Novices, as Directress of nuns who had once been penitents, and as Infirmarian. She prepared sixty-three for death, and had the consolation of seeing them all depart from this life in admirable sentiments of contrition and love. When the sick did not need her attentions, she slept in a chair by their beds, and it was said that if all the hours she had slept during two years were added together, they would not amount to as much as fourteen nights' rest. This, no doubt, is an exaggeration, but at any rate we may conclude that she actually took very little sleep. She nearly died of the plague, and whilst her companions were standing by waiting for her to draw her last breath, she suddenly began to regain strength after a violent attack of vomiting. When the doctor arrived the following day and found her up, he had very little difficulty in believing her when she told him that Saint Francis de Sales had appeared to her and cured her by a mere touch of his hand.8

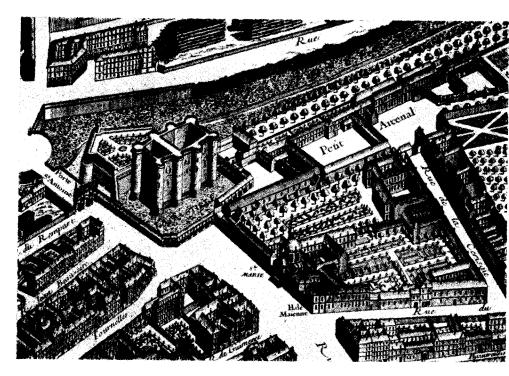
Anne Frances Belin, whom Anne of Austria used to call her favourite, remained twenty-three years at Saint Mary Magdalen's, where she filled the position of Sub-Prioress. A fervent and zealous nun, she had no other thought than how to honour God and His saints in the best possible manner. She often brought the penitents to an artificial grotto dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalen, where they all sang together hymns, motets and litanies in honour of the Saint. A chapel, built at her request, on the model of Our Lady of Loreto, became the centre of a little association composed of penitents who felt drawn to lead an interior life.⁹ She also gave them a spiritual conference every day that lasted half an hour. The Daughters of Our Lady of Loreto, as they were called, also met on Sundays and during the octaves of Feasts to assist at Benediction in honour of the Blessed Virgin. 10

It is clear that the Daughters of the Visitation experienced some consolation whilst living among their penitents, but

⁸ See Année Sainte, Vol. XII, pp. 243 and foll. for an account of her.

⁹ This chapel is referred to in *Saint Vincent de Paul*, Vol. XIII, p. 660.

¹⁰ See Année Sainte, Vol. IX, pp. 334 and foll. for an account of Sister Belin.



THE FIRST VISITATION CONVENT IN PARIS (From Turgot's Plan of Paris, 1734-1739.)

MONASTERY OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN 227

the latter were also a source of much grief and unhappiness. The nuns frequently threw envious glances towards the Rue Saint-Antoine where their companions were enjoying a life of peace, recollection and prayer. They had sought for an earthly Paradise and obedience had sent them to a hell. but a hell where souls were still capable of responding to good advice and good example; hence they were happy at the sight of the good which, in spite of everything, they were able to effect, and even rejoiced at the further weight of suffering they had to endure. But a day came when they were forced to go. As long as Mother Bollain was there the situation was endurable, but after her departure, the 'Madelonnettes,' humiliated at having been placed under the government of nuns who had been introduced from outside, became insupportable. They regarded any means of ridding themselves of the Visitandines as lawful, and published an infamous libel against them. The Archbishop of Paris sent back the Mother Superior to the first monastery and replaced her, in 1669, by a Sister from Chaillot, Madeleine Eugénie Bertaut, who was commissioned to make enquiries into the allegations that had been made in the pamphlet : as the enquiry showed that the libel was nothing but a tissue of calumnies, the prelate ordered the daughters of Saint Mary Magdalen to retract their charges publicly. The cup, however, had been filled to the brim; Mother de Fonteines begged the Archbishop to allow the Visitandines to withdraw, and her petition was granted. The Daughters of Saint Mary had been in charge of the house from 1620 to 1671, that is to say for forty-two years.¹¹

¹¹ A detailed account of these last years may be found in the National Archives, Register LL 1,689, f^o 67 v^o., and foll.

CHAPTER LV

THE SECOND MONASTERY OF THE VISITATION IN PARIS¹

SCARCELY had the Visitation Order been established in Paris than the question of another foundation was mooted. The Marquise de Dampierre, widow of Francis de Cugnac, Marquis de Dampierre, Governor of the Province of Orléans, and Lieutenant-General of the King's light cavalry, provided the preliminary funds by a gift of six thousand crowns. She intended to retire to the new convent and live a peaceful and devout life with the nuns whilst superintending her daughter's education. However, as very little could be done with six thousand crowns, Saint Francis de Sales suggested that the new establishment should begin in a modest way. In the meantime, Madame de Dampierre, as a benefactress and foundress, was allowed a right of entry in the first monastery where she kept company with Madame de Villeneuve.

Three years went by in a fruitless search for a suitable building. In the end, a friend proposed to buy the Hotel Saint-André or Fief des Tombes, a splendid mansion in the Faubourg-Saint-Jacques, almost opposite the church of Saint Jacques-du-Haut-Pas and next door to the Ursuline Convent. The house with its extensive grounds, which stretched as far as the old Rue de la Corne, was the property of M. Le Clerc, a Councillor of the Parliament. It is true he had no wish to sell, but as he was in need of money to arrive at a settlement with minors, there was an excellent hope of

¹ The materials for this chapter have been mainly taken from 1. Histoire chronologique des monastères de la Visitation (Bibl. Maz. ms. 2439); 2. P. de Salinis, op. cit., pp. 161-169; 3. Mother de Chaugy's Les Vies des quatre des premières Mères de l'Ordre de la Visitation Sainte Marie, oct., Paris 1892, pp. 54-63; 4. Année Sainte, Vol. V, pp. 531 and foll.; Vol. VI, pp. 60 and foll; Vol. XI, pp. 393 and foll.

success if the negotiations were skilfully conducted. Madame de Villeneuve took the matter in hand ; she had an interview with Le Clerc's confidential agent, told him what she wanted to do and promised him a commission of a thousand crowns if the affair went through. The nuns in the first monastery contributed their prayers. On the eighth day of their novena, June 19, 1626, Le Clerc consented to sell the mansion for 20,000 crowns, and the garden with his staff of servants for 850 livres, the sum total then being 66,300 The contract was signed with a promise that it livres. would be executed within twenty-four hours. Madame de Dampierre's 18,000 livres was only a drop in the ocean so subscriptions were collected from all quarters; the lady friends of the Order came to the nuns' assistance and Madame de Villeneuve was most generous in her help; Le Clerc granted a delay of two or three days, and ultimately the matter was settled.

The Archbishop's consent for the nuns' change of residence arrived on the evening of August 12, and their departure was fixed for the following day. The Sisters appointed to the new foundation had only one night to pack and bid good-bye to their friends. At dawn on the 13th, when the streets were almost empty, they left the Rue Saint-Antoine accompanied by Madame de Villeneuve and the Marguise de Dampierre. A chance passer-by might have seen the nuns walking modestly two by two, their veils concealing their faces, behind their Superior, Mother de Beaumont. Saint Vincent had selected for the new foundation Anne Margaret Guérin, assistant-Superior, Clare Mary Amaury, Clare Madeline de Pierre, Mary Agnes Le Roy, Mary Euphrosyne Turpin, Mary Monica de Saint Yon and a novice.² The Sisters arrived at their new home about seven o'clock. The chapel was hastily prepared for the arrival of Leblanc, the Vicar General, who was due at nine to bless the buildings. Before Mass, the Veni Creator Spiritus was chanted, and after Mass, the Te Deum. In the afternoon

² See the Année Sainte for accounts of these nuns; Vol. VI, pp. 60 and foll; Vol. X, pp. 224 and foll; Vol. VI, pp. 706 and foll; Vol. V, pp. 531 and foll; Vol. XII, pp. 395 and foll; Vol. IX, p. 676.

vol. III.—Q

the Oratorian Father Bourgoing spoke eloquently on the happiness of raising a temple and a house to the Lord, and pointed out that the city of Paris should be proud of possessing another convent. Mary Margaret de Lionne, daughter of the Grand Usher of France, was so moved by his discourse that she felt attracted to the religious life and asked to be admitted.³

In the beginning, the Sisters had to suffer endless privations; the money for the purchase of the house had absorbed all available supplies, and one day the Sister Bursar had only two half-farthings in her purse. She gave them to the girl who was to go marketing, and as the latter chanced to meet a charitable lady who gave her two crowns, the nuns had something to eat that day. All the firewood at their disposal was what they could pick up in the garden. A basket suspended from the ceiling of the community room contained the entire stock of clothing, and when it was mislaid the Mother Superior used to ask when the Sisters met to have their duties assigned to them, 'if anyone had found the wardrobe which had gone astray.'

At first. Mother de Beaumont was the Superior of both houses in Paris, but her place was taken in the first monastery by Mother Lhuillier on July 3, 1627, and she was thus able to devote her whole attention to the second. The Annals of the Visitation Order tell us that she was a marvellous success. 'It may be said,' we are told, 'that success and Mother de Beaumont's rule went hand in hand for she was able to combine a rather austere air with such charming manners that no one could but love and esteem her; this was the testimony rendered to her by M. Vincent de Paul who had a quite particular veneration for her. Queen Anne of Austria did not think it unworthy of Her Majesty to honour her with her visits. We gladly enjoyed the fruits of her wise government, and our little bark was gliding along peacefully when it was attacked from an unexpected quarter.' The attack came from Saint Chantal herself when she was in Paris in 1628. A letter written in April to Mother Favre at Annecy ordered her to come to once to the capital; Mother de Beaumont was deposed and sent to Annecy, and

³ See the Année Sainte, Vol. II, p. 302, for an account of her.

on May 28 Mother Favre was elected. When the result of the election was announced, Saint Chantal wrote to the new Superioress : 'It was necessary for the glory of God and the good of the Institute that you should be placed there. Dear M. Grillet, the Mother Superior of the city, Madame de Villeneuve and M. Crichant are all delighted and in such a holy state of contentment at your government, for which they have a love so full of esteem that they cannot remain silent about it.'

What had happened? The question was discussed inside and outside the convent; some thought Saint Chantal had wished to test Mother de Beaumont's virtue; some that she feared lest the spirit of simplicity and recollection might be injured by the frequent visits of the Queen, whilst others, aware of the differences of opinion that had arisen between the deposed nun and Madame de Villeneuve, saw a connection between this deposition and the cooling off of their friendship.⁴ However this may be, Mother Favre,⁵ who was known in the Order as 'the holy foundress' eldest daughter,' was elected by the Sisters in the Faubourg-Saint-Jacques, and a few days later Saint Vincent thanked Saint Chantal for the gift she had bestowed on the convent.

Mother Favre's six years of office proved to be fruitful. The convent was poor; it needed and found a large number of benefactors, and Baroness de Chantal, the daughter-inlaw of the foundress, Madame de Montigny and M. Amaury enriched it with generous gifts. Madame de Maignelay gave 14,000 livres; the Marquise de Ragny 18,000, and a second donation of 12,000 livres; Mademoiselle Le Bret, 24,000; Madame d'Aumont, 18,000, and Frances Mary de Châteauneuf de l'Aubépine,⁶ 60,000. Several benefactors took a special interest in the chapel; the Baroness de

⁴ Salinis, op. cit., pp. 166–169. If we had all Saint Chantal's letters and had them complete, they would no doubt throw light on this interesting episode. Letter 855 in the 1878 edition (Sainte Jeanne Françoise Frémyot de Chantal, Lettres, Vol. III, p. 161) certainly seems to refer to this affair in the part that is missing.

⁵ See Chaugy, op. cit., pp. 3 and foll. for an account of her.

⁶ Sainte Jeanne Françoise Frémyot de Chantal, sa vie et ses œuvres, Lettres, Vol. III, p. 177.

Chantal presented it with a complete set of highly ornamented white damask vestments; Madame d'Aumont with an altar-cloth, a chasuble, a tabernacle and a monstrance; M. de Lionne, Secretary of State, and Mademoiselle de Longueville, afterwards Duchesse de Nemours, also made gifts commensurate with their rank. Mademoiselle de Châteauneuf,⁷ filled with grief that she had not 'in her possession all the crowns in the world to offer them to God,' despoiled herself of all her jewels. The money realised by the sale of her pearls and ear-rings served to build a magnificent chapel dedicated to the Burial of Our Saviour. Thanks to the generosity of other benefactors the convent chapel also acquired many relics of saints : Mazarin presented the body of Saint Christine to which Madame de Lamoignon, when ill, attributed her cure; M. de Lionne the body of Saint Aurchie; M. de Basville-Lamoignon, that of Saint Theophilus; Madame Nicolay that of Saint Privat, martyr; and another person, an arm of Saint Sabina.

But the greatest treasure the convent possessed was the fervour of the nuns who dwelt there. Postulants entered ingreat numbers, confident that they would find in this monastery every means of sanctifying themselves by recollection and prayer.

Some came from the Court, such as Mary Margaret and Catherine Agnes de Lionne, 8 sisters of the Secretary of State of that name, and also Mademoiselle de Châteauneuf. The latter was fifteen years old when her uncle, the Marquis de Châteauneuf, keeper of the Seal, was disgraced and thrown into prison; in her grief she made up her mind to leave the world for a time and to live as a boarder in the second monastery of the Visitation. As, according to the rules, only great benefactresses and young girls who were being educated in the convent were allowed to reside in the house. Mother Favre refused her application. The young girl applied to the King, who provided her with a sealed letter which served as a key to the convent door. The society of the young novices, four of whom were of her own age, exercised a salutary influence over her mind, and after a

⁷ Année Sainte, Vol. V, p. 534, note.

⁸ Ibid., Vol. XI, pp. 695 and foll.

residence of some months, touched by grace, she asked to be admitted as a novice. She made rapid progress in virtue; never referred to her noble rank, or the large gifts she had given the house and never presumed on them to ask for a privilege or special favour either for herself or for any of her family. A visit to the parlour was to her a veritable torture, for her spirit of recollection suffered from any contact with the outside world. The Archbishop of Paris presided in person at the ceremony when she took the habit in the presence of the Queen and the chief personages of the Court, and Saint Chantal herself presented her with the veil on the day of her profession.

Mary Louise de Rochechouart de Chandenier⁹ also belonged to the highest ranks of the aristocracy, for she was a grand-niece of Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld and a niece of Madame de Sénecy. In the course of her religious life, she experienced both the tortures of scruples and the joys of extraordinary states of prayer. Saint Vincent, who was her spiritual guide, set her free from vain fears and recommended the most absolute secrecy as to the graces which God had bestowed on her. James Francis de Gondi, first Archbishop of Paris, had two nieces in the convent, the Mademoiselles de Ragny, who died shortly after their entrance; one of them had been almost totally blind from infancy. Commander de Sillerv had the joy of bringing to the Mother Superior his own niece. Frances Madeline Brulart de Sillery. who gave great examples of virtue.¹⁰ The families of illustrious members of the Parliament also had representatives in the second monastery, such as Mary Teresa Amelot,¹¹ daughter of President Amelot, and Mary Elisabeth de Lamoignon, daughter of the great Lamoignon.¹²

The former was a remarkably intelligent woman who was frequently elected Mother Superior; bishops of great dioceses did not think it beneath their dignity to consult her on important affairs; her brother, the Archbishop of Tours used to say: 'She is my principal Grand Vicar';

⁹ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 40 and foll.
¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 762 and foll.
¹¹ Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 315 and foll.
¹² Ibid., Vol. VIII, pp. 276 and foll.

she was also the principal Grand Vicar of Paris, for Archbishop Hardouin de Péréfixe used to visit her once a week to submit his difficulties to her. Mary Elisabeth de Lamoignon had the happiness of seeing in the convent chapel, on the day she took the habit, the Archbishop of Paris who presided at the ceremony, and the Queen surrounded by several members of the Parliament. This holy nun was tried long and severely in various ways : physical suffering, doubts as to her vocation, and scruples ; she was uneasy about her confessions and her Holy Communions seemed to her to be so many sacrileges. Extraordinary graces, however, sustained her courage. The greatest of these was granted to her on December 28, 1636, the anniversary of the death of Saint Francis de Sales, at a time when she was experiencing intense spiritual darkness and desolation. About five o'clock in the afternoon when the Community was reciting the Vespers of a Confessor Pontiff in the oratory of the Holy Bishop, she thought she saw him sitting in a chair; his expression was serious and affable, his eyes raised towards Heaven, and he seemed to be taking great pleasure in the praises chanted by the Sisters. This gracious apparition restored peace to the heart of the devout nun.

Another nun in the second monastery was the widow of a Master of Accounts, Mary Clare de Coudray, ¹³ who before becoming a Visitandine had given large sums of money in charity to the poor of Paris. When the question arose of her dowry, she said to Mother Favre, with tears in her eyes, 'I desire, Mother, if you please, to redeem my sins by giving up all my possessions.' The Superioress replied : 'Leave part of your fortune to your family and that will prevent any complaints.' When some time afterwards she was in danger of death from illness, Saint Vincent assisted and encouraged her by reminding her of her many acts of charity, saying : 'God has mercifully accepted with both hands the sacrifice you made of all your possessions; in the right hand, all that you have given to this house, and in the left, all that you have done under obedience for the poor.' She answered : 'Father, if my little possessions are in God's hands, as you tell me, nothing now remains for me to do but

¹³ Année Sainte, Vol. VIII, p. 483.

to place my soul at His feet to be washed from its sins in His precious blood.'

The second monastery had also connections with the medical profession, as Mary Augustine and Frances Augustine Bouvard were both daughters of Louis XIII's chief physician, and their niece, Geneviève Cousinot subsequently took the veil.¹⁴

The sisters of two Priests of the Mission were also to be found in the convent of the Faubourg-Saint-Jacques; Anne Mary, a sister of Father Réné Alméras, and Louise Augustine, 15 a sister of Father James de la Fosse. The former was sent from Paris to Amiens where for many years, she showed herself to be a wise and prudent Mother Superior. The latter was blessed by Saint Francis de Sales two days after her birth. 'Here,' said the bishop, placing his hand on her head, 'is a little bee for our little Visitation hive.' In her youth she was as fond of the world as the world was of her ; she was beautiful, gracious, attractive ; had studied music, painting and medicine, and enjoyed the favour of the Princess de Conti and Queen Marie de Médicis. An attack of smallpox, however, opened her eyes to the vanities of this world, and when her countenance had ceased to attract creatures, she turned to her Creator, and, notwithstanding her mother's tears, entered the hive of which Saint Francis de Sales had spoken.

We now come to a benefactress of the convent, Mademoiselle Le Bret, who, after giving all she possessed, joined the Order and died within a year of her religious profession, assisted by Saint Vincent.

Mary Agnes de Lafonds¹⁶ had to oppose her parents' wishes and even to circumvent their guile before she could join the Order. A young man belonging to a wealthy family asked for her hand, which she refused; as her mother was very anxious for the marriage, she formed a plan. The girl was told that one of her cousins had consented to wed the

¹⁴ See accounts of these three nuns in Année Sainte, Vol. XI, pp. 393 and foll; Vol. III, pp. 19 and foll; Vol. VII, pp. 485 and foll.

¹⁵ Année Sainte, Vol. III, pp. 719 and foll.

¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 533.

young man whom she had refused ; the marriage contract was handed to her to sign, which she did without a thought of a trap, and when the wedding-day arrived she went to church with the rest. As they were entering the church, her mother said : 'My daughter, do not disgrace me in public ; it is not your cousin but you whom the young man wishes to marry.' Mary Agnes was dazed and allowed herself to be led up to the altar, although fully determined not to give her consent. When the priest interrogated her, her mother trod on her dress thus causing the girl to bend her head and it was pretended that this was a sign that she had consented. On leaving the church, the young girl fled to Madame de Villeneuve and remained with her until the alleged marriage had been declared invalid.

We cannot give even a brief account of all the nuns in the second monastery who were remarkable for their virtues; we shall merely mention the names of Joan Frances Amaury, Anne Jacqueline Baudouin, Margaret Augustina du Tartre, Madeline Elisabeth Charlet, Joan Frances Pinard,¹⁷ Catharine Angela Desmé de la Chesnaye, and Madame de Foran. We shall meet others equally worthy of admiration in the course of our narrative.

The number of nuns in the monastery became so large that the buildings no longer afforded sufficient accommodation, and Mansart drew up plans for a splendid wing of which Commander de Sillery laid the first stone. In the course of the building operations a large sum of money, 8,000 livres to pay the workmen, was stolen from a drawer. In the following year a bag was found inserted between the bars of a window, containing 3,463 livres and a note : 'Holy daughters of Heaven, this is my share of the plunder ; pray to God for me.' An altar dedicated to Saint Joseph was erected in thanksgiving. The monastery was afterwards enlarged, thanks to the generosity of the wife of Marshal Schomberg who had retired to the convent to supervise the education of her daughter. As she felt cramped in the quarters placed at her disposal, she had a large wing built

¹⁷ See Année Sainte, Vol. I, pp. 735 and foll; Vol. V, pp. 207 and foll; Vol. VI, pp. 453 and foll; Vol. VIII, pp. 76 and foll. for accounts of these nuns.

at the end of the garden and also one side of the cloister. She selected a room in the new wing, leaving the rest of the building at the disposal of the Mother Superior. As the site was pleasant and airy, it was obviously a suitable place for the sick, and the infirmary was transferred there. The change, however, added considerably to the work of the infirmarian Sisters, for night and day, winter and summer, they had to cart the length of a long garden all the firewood and provisions needed for the infirmary. Sundays and holidays were for these Sisters no days of rest, for they were accustomed to voke themselves to a carriage to transport those who were sick to the chapel, going and returning until the last invalid had been brought to her place. The little boarders took the greatest delight in watching the stouthearted infirmarians voked to their vehicle; they might have been long left at their heavy work if thieves had not broken in and robbed the chapel in the garden. As there were fears lest a similar incident might occur, the infirmary was moved back to the old building.

In the spring of 1631, Mother Favre was invited by the Bishop of Troyes to go to that city to reform, or rather to bring under the rule of the Visitation Order, a convent of nuns who had long been unacquainted either with rule or with cloister. She set off, taking with her a few Sisters whom she intended to leave after her under the charge of Sister Clare Mary Amaury. They were refused admittance at the gates of the city by order of the municipal authorities, and withdrew to the Bishop's country house at Saint Lyé two leagues distant, where they waited patiently for several months to see how Providence would settle their affairs. Opposition at length ceased and on July 6 they entered the convent.

When Mother Favre returned to Paris she was again re-elected; her second term of office was marked by attacks of severe illness and long absences from the convent. When in 1634 Sister Mary Agnes le Roy succeeded Mother Favre, the latter was chosen for Rennes, but owing to illness was unable to go there. She remained in Paris until the spring of 1635, to the great satisfaction of the new Mother Superior, who was barely thirty-one years old and who felt the need of a wise counsellor at her side.

During Mother Favre's two periods of office, her confidential agent was a former ecclesiastic, who, after allowing himself to be perverted by the Calvinists, had returned to the true faith, converted by Saint Francis de Sales. The great Bishop of Geneva had thought highly of the man: Mother Favre and Mother le Roy were charmed with his honesty and devotion, so that when he told them he was in need of a rather large sum of money which he promised to repay within a fortnight, Mother le Roy did not hesitate about giving it to him on his promising to let her have a receipt. The money lent constituted almost all the available resources of the community, and the Mother Superior waited in vain for the receipt of the borrower. She began to grow uneasy, and consulted some friends of the convent; De Lamoignon took up the matter and enquiries were instituted. with the result that the affair gained a regrettable publicity. Tongues began to wag, and the general opinion was that the man was a poor innocent victim of abominable calumnies. Matters went to such a pass that Mother le Roy's uncle, the Bishop of Lisieux, came to the conclusion that he should justify his niece with Queen Anne of Austria. The thief had gone to Lyons but was back in Paris within a month ; he was recognised on the very day of his arrival, taken to the convent parlour and compelled by the Bishop of Lisieux and President de Lamoignon to admit the crime and to state where he had concealed the money. Saint Chantal heard the good news from Mother le Roy, who wrote : 'Those who yesterday were calling us wicked women and liars are to-day calling us saints and true daughters of God. This has taught me to pay no regard whatever to what the world thinks. Ah ! my dear Mother, how occasions such as these teach us widom, and what fruit has not this trial produced !' The Sisters not only recovered their good name but also their money, except two hundred pistoles spent by the thief.

If the convent had sustained a loss of earthly goods, it was recompensed by a growth of confidence in God and an increase in fervour. Mother le Roy set an example. 'Everything about her,' we read in the *Annales*, 'was redolent of a modest gravity and wisdom, and yet meekness was the most noticeable feature in all her words and actions. She

governed her daughters with so much charity that she lightened their heaviest burthens, and she greatly preferred actions performed for the love of God to those done out of fear.' Saint Vincent, moreover, was always at hand to give her advice and to assist her in carrying out every measure calculated to raise souls to a high degree of perfection. He secured the services of the Barnabite Fathers, recently arrived in Paris, as their extraordinary confessors, and on more than one occasion persuaded eminent prelates to address the nuns on spiritual subjects. The Conferences at which he sometimes spoke were held twice a week during Lent in presence of the whole community gathered together in the convent parlour, after he had asked a number of Sisters to express their thoughts on the topic proposed. The more timid would gladly have given their companions an opportunity of expressing their ideas first, as they were frightened at the thought of speaking in public. One day a Sister wrote out her thoughts on a large open sheet of paper which she pinned to the back of the Sister in front of her. At the beginning of the exercises, the nuns turned towards the altar to recite the usual prayers; Saint Vincent, who always had his eyes about him, noticed the white piece of paper and had not much difficulty in guessing the stratagem of the prudent Visitandine. The conference began amidst general merriment, with the exception of the poor Sister who no doubt was blushing at the discovery of her little stratagem, and who probably did not escape the ordeal she had dreaded.18

The foundations made in Angers and Amiens deprived the convent of some excellent Sisters. Those destined for Angers left Paris on November 14, 1635, and amongst them were Marie Gabrielle de Beauregard and Renée Marie de Buzenval, who were soon afterwards joined by their Mother Superior, Clare Madeline de Pierre. In 1640 the convent at Amiens was opened and to it Saint Vincent sent Marie Euphrosyne Turpin as Mother Superior, with Frances Catherine Maillard, Anne Marie Alméras and Catherine Agnes de Lionne to form the community.

This foundation was made during the last years of Mother

¹⁸ Année Sainte, Vol. V, p. 538, note.

le Roy's second period of office. Her place was taken by Anne Margaret Guérin who had the happiness, when a young girl, of being presented to Saint Francis de Sales, of receiving his blessing and even of hearing him say: 'She will be a daughter of ours one day.' His prophecy was not long unfulfilled, for he saw it realised before he left Paris. Sister Guérin had been Mother Superior at Rouen for six years, to the great satisfaction of all her community; everything seemed to indicate that she would govern the second monastery of Paris wisely and the general hopes were fulfilled.

In 1646, Mother le Roy was again in office, which she held until 1652; it was to her that the Queen of Poland, Louise Marie de Gonzague, applied through the agency of Madame de Lamoignon for the establishment of a convent of the Order in Warsaw. The Queen guaranteed an annual revenue of 6,000 livres and a sum of 60,000 livres for buildings, and in return, she asked the nuns to admit without payment as many girls as the house could support, and also not to exact from others anything beyond the cost of maintenance. The contract was arranged on October 15, 1649, in presence of M. des Novers, and then sent post-haste to France to be signed, which was done in the presence of Saint Vincent who also appended his signature. Several Sisters volunteered to go, and Mother le Roy decided to accompany them to Poland; preparations were made; everything was ready, but the war made travelling unsafe and the journey was postponed.

When peace was restored, the Archbishop of Paris, who had at first praised and given his approval to the undertaking, now forbade it. The Queen of Poland was deeply distressed, and neither prayers, novenas nor acts of mortification and penance could alter the prelate's decision. More than three years passed before anything was done. Mother le Roy outflanked the Archbishop by asking the convent at Anneçy to supply the new establishment with Superiors, and the convent at Troyes to send Sisters. The travellers were to meet at the second monastery in Paris, and from thence proceed to Rouen. We have already related how, as a result of their vessel being captured by the English, the nuns were taken to Dover as prisoners and so

were unable to finish the journey. Mother le Roy felt this failure all the more deeply as she was blamed for it. Saint Vincent wrote her a note to console her : 'Well, well, my dear Mother, this is a piece of good news, thanks be to God ! Blessed be Our Lord Jesus Christ! It seems to me that your heart has been a little bit grieved because all this has been imputed to you; so much the better, my dear Mother ! Are you not very happy at being found fault with for such a good cause? You may well imagine that I too have had a fair share of the blame. Good is not really good unless one suffers whilst doing it. "Charity," says the Apostle, "is patient"; hence there will always be something to be endured when we carry out the duties of charity, and it is even greatly to be feared that good done without suffering is not perfect good. The Son of God has shown us this truth since He desired so intensely to suffer in all the good which He wrought on our behalf. So, my dear Mother, let us suffer bravely and humbly; perhaps you will find in Heaven, that of all the good works you have ever done, this will be one of the most pleasing to God.'19

In 1650 the Archbishop of Paris failed to prevent another foundation; that of Mons in Hainault. As Mother le Roy was a native of that city, she was greatly pleased to hear that a benefactress had offered to provide the funds to establish a Visitation convent there. Saint Vincent selected Mary Margaret de Lionne as first Mother Superior, and he declined to release her from the appointment, despite her prayers and tears. At this time France and Spain were at war, and it was necessary to pass through provinces occupied by hostile armies if they were to reach Mons. As this undoubtedly entailed a certain amount of danger, the relatives of the Sisters appointed to Mons took fright and succeeded in inducing the Archbishop to forbid the Sisters to leave. When Madame le Roy, the Reverend Mother's sister-in-law, learned this, she came from Mons to Paris to try to induce the Archbishop to yield. The nuns' relations then turned to Saint Vincent who fell in with their wishes, but Madame le Roy did not lose heart ; she went at once, although it was nine o'clock in the evening, to Anne of

¹⁹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 10.

Austria. The Queen gave her an audience, handed her the passports and the papers needed to ensure the Sisters' safety, and had her conveyed to Saint-Lazare to receive the usual official appointments from Saint Vincent. About eleven o'clock the documents were taken to the convent, and to avoid any further opposition, it was settled that the nuns should leave next day. Mother le Roy accompanied the little band, sustaining their courage when in danger, for they did in fact meet with numerous and annoying mishaps, and she remained with them in Mons for three months to help them to surmount the initial difficulties.

Mother le Roy's second term of office was disturbed by the civil wars of the Fronde. As the convent was situated outside the city walls, it was liable to be plundered by the soldiers. The community redoubled its prayers and acts of penance to obtain the divine protection, and the Mother Superior, though not herself too happy in mind, bravely encouraged her Sisters. Peace was all the more to be desired as the dearth of food and provisions was now beginning to assume disquieting proportions; prices ran so high that existence was scarcely possible save for the wealthy. Saint Vincent, in the course of one of his regular visitations to the convent at this period, strongly urged the nuns to foster a spirit of economy, and pointed out the necessity of bringing down expenses if they were to have enough on which to subsist. The Sisters, who were now told for the first time that the interest on their dowries had to be employed, and that the revenues of the convent were diminishing in value, gladly accepted the necessary restrictions imposed on them. Saint Vincent de Paul was very loath to impose sacrifices of this nature, and removed them as soon as he possibly could. He appealed to the sympathy of wealthy ladies, and thanks to the gifts he received, the Sisters were able to live through the bad times without too much suffering.

In 1652 Mother le Roy was replaced by Mother Mary Augustine Bouvard, who had been in charge of the convent at Angers from 1645 to 1651. Several provinces and the environs of Paris were at this time almost in a state of anarchy, for bands of undisciplined soldiers were terrorising the countryside, and the new Superioress, after six weeks of

enforced leisure at Orléans, arrived at the second monastery, under the protection of two ecclesiastics and a guard. She found the nuns very much disturbed at the gravity of the situation. To a letter which she wrote to give expression to the general uneasiness, Saint Vincent replied : 'I do not at all think that your house has any reason to be afraid. Apart from the special protection of God, there is the esteem in which as a general rule your Order is held, and also the interest which all the relations of our dear Sisters take in your preservation. Your walls, on the countryside, are, thanks be to God, both strong and high. Oh, my dear Sister, I do not see that you have anything to be alarmed about.'²⁰ The Sisters, in point of fact, suffered no harm, and peace was soon restored.

Mother Bouvard had a special devotion to God's house ; she had the convent chapel decorated, a wooden statue of Notre Dame du Haut placed in it, and the body of Saint Christine, the arm of Saint Sabina and the relics of Saint Francis de Sales enclosed in beautiful shrines. Her charity extended to the foreign missions, to which she sent vestments, pictures, rosary beads, Agnus Deis and alms. Unfortunately she was not as strong as she was active, and after her two periods of office only survived a year and a half. When Saint Vincent heard of her death, he wrote to Mother le Roy, who was re-elected in 1658: 'I trust that the esteem and affection in which she was held by the whole house may prove useful to it by serving as a motive to embrace her virtues: the candour which she always professed, the innocence and aversion from evil with which she was penetrated, the zeal for all that is good, the exact observance of rule, and fidelity to the interior impulses of the Holy Spirit.'

Mother Bouvard always regretted that she was unable to build a church in honour of God that would be worthy of Him. If the monastery did not find another Commander de Sillery to assist it to do so, yet it had, as we have seen, many generous benefactors. Apart from the nuns' dowries and the alms that were collected, the house was maintained by the fees paid by boarders of whom there were two classes : ladies and young girls educated in the convent.

²⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 410.

Foundresses were entitled, if they so pleased, to reside in the monastery. Madame de Dampierre, Madame d'Aumont and Madame de Ragny had availed themselves of this privilege for some time. When Madame d'Aumont, at a later period, was spoiled by frequenting the society of Jansenists and endeavoured to spread their ideas in the monastery. her money was returned with expressions of thanks, and she was compelled to leave. Other guests were the wife of Marshal Schomberg, Mademoiselle de Longueville, later Duchess of Nemours, who stayed several months, and the widow of M. de Tanneur. The latter would, like her daughter. Claude Marie, have entered the religious life if she had not thought herself unworthy of such a high vocation; her veneration for the Sisters was so profound that she used to kiss their footsteps.²¹

The young boarders were divided into two classes : seculars and 'little Sisters.'22 The latter were gradually initiated into the virtues and customs of the cloister ; they wore veils and a uniform costume which in its simplicity and severity resembled a religious habit. They were trained to lead the life of a Visitation nun, and when old enough (fifteen years was regarded as sufficient) and considered suitable, they were admitted into the novitiate. This method of recruiting was not the best. The 'little Sisters' who joined, wrote Saint Vincent,²³ 'lead a lax and slothful life, because they have not a true vocation, having been placed in the convent by their relations, and having remained there from human respect.' 'They are lax as a general rule, and have no heart in their work. His lordship of Geneva allowed the nuns of the Visitation to admit them. but they should never exceed six in number.'24

Mary Teresa Amelot, Frances Madeline Brulart de Sillery, Anne Elisabeth de Lamoignon, Elisabeth Mélanie de Lionne and the two sisters de Ragny showed by their example that there were admirable exceptions. The two latter were the first boarders, and the fees must have been high and the education very much appreciated if we are to

²¹ Année Sainte, Vol. V, p. 539; Histoire Chronologique, ms. 2439.

²² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, pp. 392-393.

²³ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 564.
²⁴ Ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 652.

judge by the lists of names of pupils that have come down to us.

In addition to those pupils already mentioned who resided at the convent in the Faubourg-Saint-Jacques, there were four daughters of President de Lamoignon, a second daughter of President Amelot, a daughter of Madame de Schomberg, a second daughter of Madame de Lionne, a daughter of Madame de Sévigné, who was afterwards known to fame as the Countess de Grignan, a daughter of the Duc de Bouillon and two of Mazarin's nieces.²⁵ The Cardinal never forgot to look after his nieces' interests ; one of them married the Prince de Conti ; another, the Count of Soissons, and a third the Duc de Mercœur. At the end of the Fronde, when he had firmly established himself in power, he brought his two sisters, Signorine Martinozzi and Mancini, with their children, from Italy.

As the two youngest of Madame Mancini's children were not old enough to appear at Court, Mazarin sent them to the second monastery. The annals of the Order tell us : 'We had not to weigh the question of whether we should accept them or not, or on what conditions; people thought that a great honour was being conferred on us. M. Vincent himself, who was so detached from all earthly things, said that one must yield to the powers that be, and hence he made no difficulty about allowing the Cardinal's family a right of entry to the monastery, although he refused all other ladies with even greater rigour than ever, because, as he said, he had studied the Councils. If, in the eyes of the world, it was a great advantage to us to have these young ladies, their pension of 4,000 livres was also very useful. M. Colbert, the Cardinal's agent, who has since become so famous, used to come regularly to pay it, and did not think it beneath him to carry a bag of 1,000 francs under his cloak. When these young ladies arrived, orders were given to make presents to all persons employed in the house, even to the gardeners and those employed in the laundry.'

After establishing a number of branch houses in the provinces, the second monastery also made a foundation in the city of Paris itself.

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. VIII, pp. 392-393. Année Sainte, Vol. V, p. 539. VOL. III.—R

M. d'Amfreville, second President a mortier in the Parliament of Rouen, had made a stipulation in his will that a large sum of money for the establishment of a community of women should be the first charge on his property; no special order of nuns was mentioned, but it was laid down that the rule should not be too severe. His widow was approached from various quarters; Anne of Austria suggested Val-de-Grâce : the Duchess of Nemours an entirely new community. Madame d'Amfreville's letters to Sister Guérin, whom she knew very well, made it clear to those in Paris that she was thinking of the Visitation Order. She proposed to add 20,000 livres of her own to her husband's bequest. When Saint Vincent and Mother Bouvard, then Superioress, heard that she was residing with the Carmelite nuns of Rouen. they naturally concluded that she would select that community, but such was not the case. The charitable widow travelled to Paris to arrange the matter with the Saint and the Reverend Mother, and she easily did so. The President's heirs, however, contested the validity of the bequest, and Madame d'Amfreville was obliged, on account of the legal proceedings, to remain in Paris for some time. She took up her residence in the second monastery. When Sister Guérin learned that Mother Bouvard had refused to furnish her apartments, she was greatly distressed and asked the lady to excuse her. 'I have already managed quite well to do without furniture and I can do so again,' said Madame d'Amfreville, 'and, as a matter of fact, I do not wish to incommode my friends. This will not prevent me from keeping my promise, for I do not go back on my word.' Although hurt by the refusal, she admired the independence of the nuns and this feeling overcame her mortification. When they were least expecting it and before a contract was made, she sent them 20,000 livres, and a similar amount shortly afterwards. When a settlement had been arrived at with the heirs, the Sisters received an additional sum of 12,000 livres. Madame d'Amfreville, in return, made a few slight stipulations : that the arms of her family should be placed in a prominent position in the church, that a Requiem Office should be chanted, and that every year on the first of May, a Mass should be celebrated for the repose of the

soul of her husband. The charitable foundress died shortly after she had signed the contract.

The difficulties raised by the heirs were not the only ones; Anne of Austria, Henrietta Maria of England and the King's Council opposed the foundation. All seemed lost. The Sisters of the second monastery redoubled their prayers and decided that the first novice who presented herself should be admitted without a dowry, that it would be her special duty to pray for the souls of the founders and that the future monastery would be dedicated to Our Lady of Peace. In the meantime, Madame de Lamoignon and the wife of President Hardier had brought influence to bear on some of the most important personages at Court, with the result that might be expected. They were quite successful.

The Sisters now had their hands free, but the funds at their disposal were really quite out of proportion to the anticipated expenses of a new establishment. Sister Guérin, trusting to Providence, proposed to buy an old house in the Rue Montorgueil which was offered at 40,000 livres. If this sum were expended, only 11,000 livres was left for repairs, the building of a chapel and the support of the nuns, and this was manifestly insufficient. Saint Vincent took up his pen to remind Sister Guérin that there was such a virtue as prudence : 'I have never altered my opinion,'26 he wrote on July 20, 1659, 'in regard to the large house in the Rue Montorgueil. I cannot persuade myself that it should be purchased either as a whole or in part; as a whole, because the price is so very high that it will be liable to ruin the community in which you now live; or in part, because even half of it would consume your entire funds; now, that is not expedient, because there should be a surplus to maintain the Sisters of the new foundation.'

Saint Vincent takes up one by one the reasons alleged by Sister Guérin to justify her conduct, and then proceeds to refute them.

The contract, said the nun, strictly interpreting the terms of the document, the contract obliges us to devote the whole sum to the purchase of a house. To this he replies at once and decisively :

²⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, pp. 39 and foll.

'Those who lend or give money for any purpose intend to make it perfectly plain that their money shall be devoted to that purpose. Now, as those who are dead intended to establish a monastery of your Order, they did not mean to supply you with a splendid building and then leave you unable either to live in it or to fill it, which would happen if you had not something on which to live.'

Sister Guérin was not troubled by the problem of how the nuns were to live. 'Those who join,' she said, ' will bring enough to support them.' 'Their dowries,' he retorted, ' must be used up, even before they have been acquired by the community.' 'What will it cost,' Sister Guérin goes on, 'to feed eight Sisters? Almost nothing.' 'Almost nothing !' he cries, 'I think that in Paris, taking everything into account, it will amount to not less than 3,000 livres. Where are you going to get them?' The Sister said she was relying on a lady who had promised to give abundantly, but Saint Vincent was only too well aware of the fragile nature of a promise. 'Very well,' he replied, 'that will come in its own good time.' And he goes on in a more serious tone : 'I admit that one may expect something from Providence. but one must not tempt God, who, having honourably given you enough to begin and carry on a foundation whilst observing the rule of religious poverty, does not wish that one should go to unnecessary expense in order then to commit oneself to His Providence. I cannot here refrain from telling you, my dear Sister, that in Paris we see a number of communities that have been ruined, not through want of confidence in God, but because they have erected magnificent buildings which have not only exhausted their resources but compelled them to further commitments; and as the religious spirit should be in conformity with that of Our Lord who willed to practise extreme poverty whilst on earth, not having even a stone whereon to lay His head, so persons leading a religious life withdraw farther away from Him the more they struggle to keep up appearances, because God takes no pleasure in beautiful buildings that are so greatly out of proportion with their profession. Nevertheless, those who own such places are not to be blamed if they have had enough to build them and to carry them on, and I should

not wish to prevent you from acting likewise if your present resources admitted. But you might quite easily succumb beneath the weight of such an expensive house, which would also cost a great deal more because it is old and would be in need of continual repairs. . . How grieved you would be, my dear Sister, if your foundation were one day to fail for having undertaken this enterprise, or your monastery be put to great inconvenience because you had not now practised that holy poverty which you have vowed and which thanks be to God, you observe in every other particular.'

However, as against Saint Vincent's opinion, there were Madame d'Amfreville's reproaches, and Sister Guérin heard interior voices blaming her unceasingly for having postponed the foundation.

'It is not she, my dear Sister,' Saint Vincent remarks, ' it is not she who thus speaks to you because she is now in a place where she wishes only what God wishes, and God wishes you to do only what you can do. He wishes that you should be content for the present with suitable accommodation, at a reasonable price, because you have enough money to pay for it, enough to set it in order and enough to provide for your other necessary wants; and He does not wish that you should go beyond that, because you have not the means of doing so and because the poverty you have embraced will not allow it. Hence a place must be chosen that is suitable to your designs and that comes within the range of both your powers and your condition. Is it possible that such a one has not hitherto been discovered or cannot be discovered in such a large city as Paris in which there are buildings of so many kinds? I cannot imagine, my dear Sister, that one cannot be found, if you will only have a search made for it.'

A circumstance of which we are ignorant, quite possibly the gift of a large sum of money, enabled Sister Guérin to realise her project; the house in the Rue Montorgueil was bought at the price fixed, and the Duchess of Nemours laid the foundation stone of the chapel. The various difficulties that had arisen had deferred the foundation for four years.

Saint Vincent appointed Sister Guérin Superioress, Sister Incelin Assistant, and Sisters Mary Louise and Charlotte Henrietta de Chandenier, Madeline Augustine and Louise Agnes Fouquet, members of the new community. Nicholas Fouquet, the Minister of Finance, and the Chevalier de Chandenier were then all-powerful at Court, and the appointment of their sisters to the third monastery in the Rue Montorgueil secured for it the protectors and benefactors which it needed.

The little community took possession of its new home on Sunday, July 25, 1660, whilst the workmen were still in the house. There were no doors or windows except in the dormitory; all the other rooms were open to the four winds of Heaven. The official installation did not take place until the last day of the month, when Le Comte, Dean of Notre-Dame and Vicar General, said Mass and exposed the Blessed Sacrament; then, vested in a cope and accompanied by several ecclesiastics, he blessed the house, presided at the procession, received the profession of faith of the Mother Superior and established enclosure.

From that day forward the community carried out the usual exercises of the religious life. The nuns spent only fifteen years in the Rue Montorgueil and during that time they were always in difficulties; at first, because the new buildings and the alterations of the old house were not completed, and afterwards because the number of Sisters increased to such an extent that the place became too small. As it was impossible to expand, a new house had to be sought. A small house with very extensive grounds was for sale in the Rue du Bac; it was purchased in 1673, and a spacious convent was built, to which the Sisters of the third monastery were transferred. Saint Vincent had been dead many a day when this change took place; the severe illness that kept him confined to his room on the day when the nuns took possession of the building in the Rue Montorgueil carried him off two months later. The history of this establishment only concerns us here in regard to the circumstances that led up to its foundation, but it was otherwise with the convent at Saint-Denis, of which the Saint saw the beginnings and the development, and of which he was Superior for twenty years.



THE SECOND VISITATION CONVENT IN PARIS (From Turgot's Plan of Paris, 1734-1739.)

CHAPTER LVI

THE VISITATION CONVENT AT SAINT-DENIS¹

HEN Saint Vincent spoke of establishing a convent of the Visitation at Saint-Denis, both the Abbot and the city authorities objected, but their oppositions had no effect on Queen Anne of Austria who saw that the letters patent of foundation were issued. The house was prepared for the Sisters and its furniture supplied by the first monastery. On June 30, 1630, Saint Vincent sent eight nuns to Saint-Denis under the direction of Sister Elisabeth Phelippeaux de Pontchartrain. The Countess of Saint Paul and the ladies who accompanied her thither, were present with the nuns at the religious ceremonies which marked the inauguration and which were carried out by the delegate of the Archbishop of Paris, Leblanc, the Vicar General. Four postulants who arrived on the same day formed the novitiate; only one of them had a dowry and it was a very modest one.

In the beginning, a hundred crowns constituted all the worldly wealth of the establishment, and when this sum was exhausted the nuns had to depend on what Providence would send. Mother de Pontchartrain was quite content to do so for 'she was,' as the Annals of the Order tell us, 'a real seraph burning with love,' and her confidence was based on this love. For three months the Sister Bursar had only two half-farthings in her purse, but in spite of that the Out-Sister went off to market without any money. She bought on credit and the debts were scrupulously discharged, though sometimes rather late.

The nuns lived on very little and competed as to who

¹ For this chapter we have utilised : 1. *Histoire chronologique* (Bibl. Maz., ms. 2434) ; 2. *Année Sainte*, Vol. I, pp. 743 and foll. ; Vol. VII, pp. 699–700.

should be the most mortified ; some Sisters never touched the fruit served at table, or approached a fire for the sake of its warmth for years; others even ate fruit that had begun to grow bad and did not take the trouble to throw away the part that had decayed. A Sister, asked what mortifications she had practised that day, took out of her sleeve and the back of her dress handfuls of cockchafers which flew around the room. The Sisters in their love of suffering employed thorns, nettles, hair-shirts, girdles of horse-hair or rope with sharp spikes; more than once disciplines with bent pins were discovered stained with blood. Every Friday, at a certain hour, the discipline was taken in common, in accordance with the rule of the Order. A Sister portress who had not found her instrument of penance, substituted for it a heavy bunch of keys. Sister Mary Gertrude Gamard² once used an iron chain that had been heated in the fire. Places in which she took the discipline were usually marked with her blood, so severely did she chastise her body. After her death the name of Jesus was found over her heart and a cross over her breast, probably engraved there with a hot iron. An infirm Sister used to sleep on a mattress filled with sticks and a sick Sister. ordered to drink a very bitter medicine every day, did so for three months, although the doctor had said to the Sister Infirmarian : 'You will see that she will have had enough of that very soon; no one has ever taken it for longer than a week.' The nuns scratched themselves or allowed themselves to be scratched by the pins that held their white veils in position without a complaint. They also mortified themselves by acts of humility either at chapter, when they accused themselves of humiliating faults, or reading in the refectory, when they made deliberate mistakes so that they might be publicly corrected.

Examples of virtue such as these, when they became known to the public filled them with admiration. Saint Vincent said : 'I breathe nothing but God when I enter the convent ; I find the spirit of the Institute there in its first fervour ' and the people added : 'There is nothing on earth

² See Année Sainte, Vol. VI, pp. 764 and foll. for an account of this Sister.

that gives a better idea of the angels of Heaven than the Sisters at Saint-Denis.'

Although the house was exposed to countless perils during the Fronde, it never suffered any damage. When the town was first plundered in 1649, a Captain of the Guards kindly protected the nuns. Shortly afterwards an Out-Sister carrying two bags containing 2,000 livres met, on the road between Paris and Saint-Denis, a band of soldiers, who surrounded her and asked her what she had in the bags. She replied without displaying any anxiety: 'These are just two bags of nails that I am going to sell to earn a living,' and then in the most innocent way asked : 'Will you buy some?' A soldier felt a bag and, finding that the contents were as hard as iron, said : 'Move on, my good woman, and take away your nails.' The danger was at its height in 1652. When the Princes entered Saint-Denis with their victorious army, the nuns met in the chapel, received a general absolution and at midnight went to Holy Communion. Thev were saved by the foresight of four soldiers who had been sent to guard the tower of the Abbey and who, passing close to the convent enclosure, fixed lighted torches to all the walls as a sign to the troops that they were not to approach ; at the same time, they sent word to the nuns that they might sleep in peace.

A week later, the vanquished, now victors, entered and pillaged the town. A troop of horsemen rode into the convent courtyard and began to hack down the cloister doors; the Confessor who ran out to stop them was seized by the throat and almost strangled. The yells of these madmen terrified the nuns, but Sister Maillard,³ after a prayer to Saint Joseph, and with her Mother Superior's permission, courageously went out to interview the soldiers. The invaders, calmed by her words, withdrew their swords which they had pushed through the holes in the grille and set the Confessor free; still more satisfactory, the man who seemed to be the most violent of the gang sent away his comrades, and, after being promised a few bottles of wine, remained to protect the house. On the approach of four of the Queen's guards, he also departed. The horsemen

⁸ Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 696 for an account of this Sister.

belonged to a regiment of Croats whose ferocity was legendary, and their officers were very much surprised to hear that their men had fallen in with the wishes of a nun, for they admitted they would not have cared to stand in Sister Maillard's shoes. Saint Vincent realised that it would be tempting Providence to leave the Sisters any longer at Saint-Denis and decided to withdraw them to the first monastery in Paris. Madame de Fiesque and Madame de Bréauté, mothers of two of the nuns, lent their carriages to remove the Sisters to the city, where they were forced to remain for six months.

In Saint Vincent's lifetime there were four Mothers Superior, each of whom held office for six consecutive years : Elisabeth Phelippeaux de Pontchartrain, Joan Catharine Amaury, Mary Agnes Chevalier and Margaret Frances Melliardier.

In 1657 it was thought that Sister Maillard would succeed Mother Chevalier, but she was set aside in circumstances that tested her humility. One of the boarders under her charge was attacked by a contagious disease; as soon as Saint Vincent was informed of the fact he had to decide on what was best to be done in the circumstances. If he put Sister Maillard's name on the list of eligible candidates and she was elected and contracted the disease, she would be liable to spread the contagion when exercising her duties as Mother Superior; if he removed her name and gave his reasons for doing so, the community might be afraid to approach her; on the other hand, if he debarred her and gave no explanation, it would seem to the other nuns that the Superior had no confidence in Sister Maillard and they might ask what had she done to be so slighted. On thinking the matter over, Saint Vincent chose the second solution. and Sister Maillard concealed her feelings in the depths of her heart; she remained silent and gave the new Superioress nothing but help, advice and devoted assistance. When she was elected afterwards, she ruled the community with such wisdom that she was thrice called to fill the same office by the choice of her companions.

Sister Maillard was one of the first four novices ; another was Marie de Chaumont, niece of Nicholas de Bailleul,

VISITATION CONVENT AT SAINT-DENIS 255

Minister of Finance. Saint Vincent had known Marie in her own home, for her mother, Madame de Bailleul, one of the Queen's ladies of honour, was also a Lady of Charity. 'God knows how heartily I wish to be of service to this dear child,' he wrote to the Mother Superior, who had asked him to profess the young novice.⁴

Sister Frances Geneviève Bourcier⁵ had a particular veneration for the virtue of obedience, but her simplicity of mind led her at times into extravagances. Somebody told her one day when her work was in arrear that she deserved to have it hung from her ear ; she at once inflicted the punishment on herself by fastening it to her ear with a pin. This, no doubt, was in itself a foolish action, possibly it was a noble one in the sight of God, for it supposes a high degree of sanctity. Edifying traits will be found in abundance in the printed notices of Sister Louise Angélique de Choisy, who belonged to one of the noblest families of France, of Marie Louise de Fiesque, god-daughter of Madame de Montpensier, of Catharine Angélique de Bréauté, grand-daughter of the governess of Mademoiselle d'Orléans, of Frances Angélique Galand, who signed a protestation of fidelity to Our Lord in her own blood, of Marie Madeline le Laboureur⁶ who lost the faith from reading poets, novelists, historians and philosophers, and was led back to God by the following remark of Seneca : 'Virtue is so beautiful that those who practise it should desire no other reward than virtue itself." The first four nuns had lived in the convent as 'little sisters' before entering the novitiate.

Such were the nuns of the Visitation Convent at Saint-Denis. Directed by a saint, they naturally brought forth fruits of holiness, for as flame begets flame so does the fire of divine love communicate itself to all who come within reach of its rays.

Saint Vincent's sanctity made itself felt in other places,

⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 56.

⁵ See Année Sainte, Vol. VII, p. 377 for an account of this Sister.

⁶ See Année Sainte, Vol. I, pp. 783 and foll.; Vol. III, pp. 340 and foll.; Vol. VII, pp. 290 and foll.; Vol. VIII, pp. 186 and foll.; Vol. IX, pp. 178 and foll. for accounts of these four nuns.

but whilst cloistered nuns were seeking the glory of God by prayer and penance alone, outside convent walls prayer and penance were being completed by action. The seventeenth century was certainly not deficient in men of action, some of whom we have already met when dealing with the reformation of the clergy. We shall now see what were their relations with Saint Vincent.

CHAPTER LVII

SAINT VINCENT'S RELATIONS WITH BOURDOISE, D'AUTHIER AND OLIER

MONGST Saint Vincent's numerous friends none perhaps was as dear to him as Adrian Bourdoise, the founder of the community of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet. Whenever they chanced to meet in the street, they embraced without exchanging a word, for heart spoke to heart. In their case, regard and affection coincided, for they loved because they esteemed each other. Saint Vincent used to kiss respectfully all letters from Bourdoise, and could not refrain from remarking : 'Behold the letter of a saint.'¹ Addressing his missionaries one day, he said :² 'Ah, gentlemen, what a wonderful thing is a good priest ! What cannot a good ecclesiastic effect ! What conversions can he not bring about ! Consider M. Bourdoise, that excellent priest, what does he not and what can he not do !'

Bourdoise had an equally high opinion of Saint Vincent. When consulted by the Duke of Liancourt about some benefices to which the latter had the right of presentation, Bourdoise replied : 'Leave the matter to M. Vincent ; I know no more honourable or more enlightened man.'³ Once, when obsessed by the thought of his failings, which, as he believed, rendered him useless to his community, he made up his mind to retire to Saint-Lazare for some months and make a prolonged retreat there. His community vainly sought to make him alter his mind ; they were quite willing that he should spend a few days at Saint-Lazare, but thought a stay of some months was too much. They begged Vincent

¹ Courtin, La vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu messire Adrien Bourdoise, 1694, Bibl. Maz., ms. 2453, p. 673.

² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. V, p. 298.

³ Darche, Le saint abbé Bourdoise, Vol. II, p. 347.

de Paul to come to their assistance, and the Saint's diplomacy secured the boon which their obstinate superior had refused them.⁴

Bourdoise was no doubt a saint, but of a type of sanctity characterised by a certain amount of oddity and rudeness. If one wished to learn the art of conveying a gentle rebuke it would have been foolish to apply for lessons to him. One afternoon, tired out by a long walk, for he was returning from Liancourt, he called at Saint-Lazare to pay his respects to Saint Vincent. The latter, guessing that the traveller was hungry, asked Father Gentil, after a short conversation. to take Bourdoise to the refectory; scarcely had he begun to eat than the bell rang for Vespers. Father Gentil, out of respect for his guest, did not move, but the latter at once left the table and went to the church, so as not to oblige his host to be absent from the Divine Office.⁵ On another occasion when invited to dine with the community, the bell rang, and Bourdoise immediately began to put on his surplice. One of the priests present said : 'We are not going to Choir but to the refectory.' 'All the same,' said the guest, 'it was the church bell that rang.' 'Yes,' replied the priest, 'but the same bell rings for the meals.' 'What !' cried Bourdoise, ' the same bell is used for sacred and profane exercises and you don't mind ! A blessed bell should only be used for sacred things.' When he returned later to Saint-Lazare, he realised, when he heard a new bell ringing that his admonition had been turned to account.⁶

Everybody did not accept his rude corrections with the same humility as his holy friend; many regarded his zeal as both too ardent and too indiscreet, and thought that if he spoke with a little more courtesy and a little less roughness he would do much more good. All his friends agreed that he should be admonished but they did not settle so easily how and by whom this should be done. Nobody wished to take the risk for fear of annoying him and of provoking a virulent attack. After several refusals, Vincent de Paul accepted the delicate mission. His heart beat fast as he set off one day to visit Bourdoise and administer his

⁴ Courtin, op. cit., p. 845. ⁵ Ibid., p. 772. ⁶ Ibid., p. 448.

little piece of advice. He began by making more acts of humility than usual, multiplied his compliments and then began : 'I have come to see you, sir, on a matter of importance, but I fear it may prove disagreeable to you; pray forgive the most wretched of men if he ventures to speak to you quite frankly.'- 'Speak out,' said Bourdoise, 'speak out boldly, I am listening to you.'-' Your friends,' resumed the Saint, ' think you would be more useful to the clergy and people, if you moderated your zeal and showed more gentleness and good manners in your relations with others.' These words released the tempest. Bourdoise cried out indignantly: 'You are all nothing but bedraggled hens ; you are nothing but trimmers, all of you are cowards who abandon the cause of God and His Church in order not to displease men.' Saint Vincent knelt down and asked his forgiveness with such gentleness that Bourdoise was touched, knelt down in turn, embraced his friend and thanked him for his kindness. It may have been that after this touching scene Bourdoise wrote his twenty-five-page letter entitled, Against the rudeness of Adrian Bourdoise.⁷

Vincent de Paul never concealed his admiration for the labours of his holy friend; he had such a high appreciation of the community of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet that he referred to it as 'one of the holiest in the Church of God '; he sought to secure recruits for it and said he would gladly have joined it if Divine Providence had not bound him to the Congregation of the Mission.⁸ He considered the Seminary of Saint-Nicholas to be the best in Paris, praised the spirit of the Seminarists and the excellent practical training they received there inasmuch as it fitted them for every form of pastoral activity when they left the establishment.⁹ He appreciated more than anybody else the advantages of parochial communities by means of which parish priests and curates were preserved from the dangers of a solitary existence, and shortly before his death he contributed to the improvement of their organisation by preparing a new set

⁷ Descourveaux, La vie de Monsieur Bourdoise, Paris, 1714, quarto, pp. 55 and foll.

⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 156.

⁹ Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 254 ; Vol. X, p. 625 ; Vol. XIII, p. 185.

of regulations in collaboration with the parish priests of Saint-Nicholas, Saint-Sulpice and Havre.¹⁰

If Bourdoise did not fully repay Vincent de Paul for all the services he had received from him, it was due to the fact that he had neither the Saint's degree of holiness nor his breadth of mind. Bourdoise, hypnotised by his own ideal of a parish community, looked with a rather indifferent eve on other bodies, such as the Congregation of the Mission, that were organised on a different plan. He endeavoured to turn away from the Company a brilliant professor of the city of Beauvais, who felt attracted to it, and even dissuaded Saint Vincent from admitting him ; it was, said Bourdoise, a question of the greater glory of God, because the professor could not do as much good elsewhere as he was doing in Beauvais.¹¹ Saint Vincent probably had good reason for his action when in one of his letters to Bourdoise he requested the latter not to put any obstacle in the way of a boarder at Saint-Nicholas who had expressed a desire to enter Saint-Lazare. 12

Despite these slight differences, no cloud ever darkened the friendship of these two men, so different in character but animated by the same zeal for the glory of God, the reformation of ecclesiastics and the salvation of the faithful.

Christopher d'Authier de Sisgau, founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, is not as well known as Adrian Bourdoise. His apostolate was exercised in the provinces of France and especially in those of the South. His priests preached missions and undertook the direction of seminaries and colleges at Avignon, Marseilles and Valence; at Senlis they had charge of a parish.

D'Authier, on his return from a journey to Rome, was urged by some of his friends to unite his community with that of the Priests of the Mission ; he went to reside at the Collège des Bons-Enfants so that he might observe the mode of life there at his leisure ; he left, after some months, fully determined to preserve his independence.¹³ Some years later

¹⁰ Letter of M. Bourdon, Doctor of the Sorbonne and parish priest of Havre (Arch. Dep. de Seine-Inférieure G. 9378).

¹¹ Bibl. Maz., ms. 2452, p. 414.

¹² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 155.

13 Ibid., pp. 244–246, 250.

Sister Mary, the saint of Valence, advised and even adjured him in the name of God to resume his abandoned project. A visit of Father Codoing and four or five Missionaries who were passing through the town on their return from a mission, decided him to make another attempt. He wrote to Saint Vincent and even went to Paris to settle the matter more easily; they held prolonged discussions but an agreement had not been reached when d'Authier left the capital, and in fact an agreement was never arrived at. Rather than accept the printed Constitutions of M. d'Authier's Congregation and make him his co-adjutor with the right of succession, as he was asked to do, Saint Vincent preferred to break off negotiations.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, it would have been much better if an agreement had been come to, because the two Congregations resembled each other so closely that occasions were often bound to arise which would lead to differences of opinion that might easily degenerate into disputes.

One of the most unfortunate resemblances was that of Although d'Authier's Institute was called the name. 'Congregation of Clerics of the Mission' or, after 1638, 'Congregation of Missionaries of the Clergy' or again, after 1647, ' Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for the direction of Missions and Seminaries,' the word 'Mission' was always included; hence the people called its members 'Missionaries' with the result that regrettable confusion ensued. We have already spoken of the riot at Annecy to which the Priests of the Mission nearly fell victims, and which was due to an incident with which they had nothing whatever to do.¹⁵ This similarity in name produced consequences of another order. Each of the Congregations had establishments at Marseilles, and when one of the citizens bequeathed property in his will to ' the priests of the Mission,' d'Authier's associates believed it was they who were referred to; so did Saint Vincent's, and the matter had to be settled by the law courts.¹⁶ Despite such embarrassments, Saint Vincent was very slow in making up his mind as to whether he should

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 397, 415–416, 422–423. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 294; Vol. VI, p. 499. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 499. Vol. III.—s intervene and urge d'Authier to alter the name of his Congregation. He sought advice, and all whom he consulted, Chancellor Séguier more strongly than anyone, urged him to put an end to 'this source of confusion and disorder.'¹⁷ He was, however, afraid to hurt the feelings of d'Authier, of whose touchiness and obstinacy he was very well aware. He contented himself with writing, in 1643, to his agent with the Holy See at Rome :18 ' It is essential that they or we should change.' The Congregation of the Mission would have found it difficult to alter a name that had been officially approved by a Papal Bull and Royal Letters Patent, and consecrated by a usage of twenty years. D'Authier's Institute was more recent, not so widely spread, had not so far received papal or royal recognition, and hence it would have been much easier for it to modify its title; but the founder preferred to retain it.

Even as late as 1650, Saint Vincent had not made up his mind as to what steps he should take; he wrote to the Superior at Rome, who had drawn the attention of a Cardinal and the Secretary of Propaganda to the inconveniences arising from the similarity of names, 'to let the matter drift' and then added that he would prefer to abandon himself to Divine Providence. The ease with which the word 'missionary' had spread fortified him all the more strongly in this resolution; he goes on to say in the same letter: 'Moreover, what are we to do? Nearly all those here who devote themselves to works similar to ours call themselves missionaries, and do so because since God in His mercy called us to this profession, He has been pleased to attach some little reputation to the name.' Even M. Olier allowed himself to be carried away by the current fashion, and was prepared to abandon the title of 'priests of the community of Saint-Sulpice' for that of 'priests of the Mission,' and the name ' Mission ' had already been applied to two or three seminaries directed by his priests. Saint Vincent, after giving this example, proceeds: 'If it is an evil, it seems to be a necessary one as far as we are concerned, for we cannot avoid it, as it would be futile for us

¹⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 56.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 423.

to oppose it. It is much better to commit the matter to God and to try to distinguish ourselves from others only by a greater submission and deference, and by the practice of the virtues that constitute a true Missionary.'¹⁹

Experience taught the Saint that his advisers were right; at his request, Olier abandoned the title of 'the Mission' and the Archbishop of Lyons who had established a society of 'Priests of the Mission' also changed the name.²⁰

There was another important similarity between d'Authier's congregation and Saint Vincent's : both were engaged in the same works, preaching missions and directing seminaries, with the result that the progress of one was calculated to injure that of the other. Saint Vincent was far too great a man to be jealous, much less to wish to humble another community, but it does not seem that the same magnanimity was so evident on the other side. The Superior of the Mission at Rome wrote in 1640 that the steps he was taking to purchase a house in that city were being hampered by the priests of the Blessed Sacrament.²¹ Again in 1651, d'Authier, who was endeavouring to obtain the bishopric of Babylon, thought that Saint Vincent was working against himself and on behalf of des Lions, the Archdeacon of Senlis. He complained about the matter, and his complaints reached Saint-Lazare. Saint Vincent wrote to explain his position, and there are very few letters that so clearly reveal the dignity and nobility of his character. After denving the fact of which he had been accused, he goes on: 'I may say this in addition: I have never said or done anything against your holy congregation; on the contrary, God has always given me a great respect for it and a desire to be of assistance to it. In proof of this, I have never celebrated Holy Mass ever since I heard of its foundation without recommending it to God, and in fact I do so twice, first when preparing to say Mass and second at the Memento, that His Divine Goodness may cause it to prosper and that His blessings may be with it in all its projects and employments, commending it to Him even more than our

¹⁹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 56.

²⁰ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 56; Vol. VI, pp. 498-502.

²¹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 465.

own because, as a matter of fact, I have a higher opinion of it. . . So that you may have no doubt about this, please afford me some opportunities of enabling you to see otherwise than by mere words that such is the case; make use of me to serve your congregation. I trust that Our Lord will give me the grace to devote myself to this task with all the energy demanded by one of God's works, for that is what I call anything that tends to the welfare of a Company such as yours, dedicated to His greater glory.'²²

What magnificent language ! Only such as true virtue can inspire. If all were animated with similar sentiments, we should see far fewer manifestations of those contemptible passions that move men to act against their fellows.

In the year in which d'Authier founded his Congregation (1632), Saint Vincent became acquainted with a young cleric, twenty-four years of age, called John James Olier. He became his Confessor, admitted him to membership of the Tuesday conferences, initiated him into the ministry of preaching missions,²³ and inspired him with a desire to labour for the reform of the clergy.²⁴ The young priest sold his carriage and dismissed his lackeys, retaining only one servant, so that he might not be obliged to divide his time between the goods of this world and the salvation of souls. Under Saint Vincent's wise guidance, he advanced rapidly in the way of perfection, but yet he was not content. In 1634, Mother Agnes de Langeac, in whom, no doubt, he had confided, wrote to Father de Condren asking him to undertake Olier's spiritual direction. Some months later, in the course of 1635, the future founder of Saint-Sulpice became the spiritual son of the Superior General of the Oratory.²⁵

If we seek for the reasons of this change, it must be admitted that Saint Vincent de Paul and the Venerable M. Olier differed in many respects. The want of similarity

²² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 142.

²³ Olier was one of those who gave missions to the workmen employed in building the first Visitation monastery in 1633 and at Crécy in January 1635; his companions were either priests of the Tuesday conferences, Vincentians or Oratorians.

²⁴ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 69 and foll; Vol. III, p. 580. ²⁵ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 135 and foll.

between the son of the poor peasant of Pouy and the son of a wealthy Paris merchant did not spring entirely from their origin and early training; the natural bents of their minds supply a partial explanation. One may ask if Saint Vincent's slowness to come to a decision, his simplicity, his propensity to guide souls in the usual paths and to put them on their guard against extraordinary ways in the spiritual life, may not have occasionally irritated his saintly friend. Again, M. Olier's conscience may perhaps have suffered at times from the frequent absences of his director, who was called away from Paris either to attend to the Confraternities of Charity or to give missions.

M. Olier himself gives the following account of how he was led to entrust his spiritual guidance to Father de Condren, 'O my All, shall I conceal the words that took possession of me and that even now pierce my heart with joy and gladness when I think of them . . . during this same retreat when still afflicted by an infidelity which I had committed two or three years after I had abandoned sin. . . . I felt in my soul pains similar to those of hell, and suddenly a powerful voice, like that of an omnipotent master, said to me : Father de Condren will bring you peace. This had such efficacy that I felt in a moment an unspeakable peace and caim.' No doubt, previous experiences had led up to Olier's definite resolution ; the incident of which he speaks only marks the culminating point ; the penitent would not have left his Confessor if he had not already felt a want of sympathy between them. Olier's biographical memoirs would have supplied us with fuller material on this delicate point if the ninth note-book, in which he deals with it at length, had not gone astray. MM. Bourbon and Leschassier, who read this section of the memoirs, sum it up in a few phrases; the former says: 'M. Olier had two directors at this time, with corresponding good results'; the latter writes: 'M. Olier, whilst under the guidance of Father de Condren, still kept M. Vincent and frequented his society.²⁶

The change took place in 1635, the very year in which Olier was urged to accept the see of Langres. Some who had wished to establish a connection between the two inci-

²⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 165-166.

dents have simply brought forward personal hypotheses that are based on no real foundations. All we do know is that Saint Vincent was aware that negotiations had already begun, that Olier was not in principle opposed to the offer made by the Bishop of Langres, that the parties interested could not reach an agreement on the conditions, and that the project was accordingly abandoned.²⁷

Whatever may have been M. Olier's reasons for taking this step, he continued to show the same esteem and affectionate veneration for Saint Vincent as before. He was accustomed to tell the ecclesiastics in his seminary: 'M. Vincent is our father.'28 He frequently consulted him, and in a letter dated 1649, he says : 'We never fail to consult M. Vincent on extraordinary affairs, and for ordinary ones, the assembled brethren.'29 It was to Saint Vincent he turned whenever he needed the support of the Queen Regent; it was to him he turned when his plan to reform the Abbey of Pebrac had failed, saying: 'Accept my benefice, I offer it to you; put your missionaries in the abbey so that by their means, the people in the district may be evangelised and strengthened in well-doing.'30 He continued to give missions with the priests of Saint-Lazare and asked for a particular priest who would teach the rest the art of religious controversy.'31

Saint Vincent was far too great a man to take offence at the fact that Father de Condren had been preferred to himself. Nothing in his relations with M. Olier gave the slightest indication of any lessening of his esteem or affection : he assisted him in the difficulties that arose about his appointment to the parish of Saint-Suplice, 32 obtained for him a benefice that Mazarin had set aside for the son of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, 33 and persuaded M. Vachet to

²⁷ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 145; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 296.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 580.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 146. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 110.

³¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 309.

³² Faillon, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 446.

³³ Arch. du Ministère des Aff. Etrang., France, Mémoires et Documents, vol. 894, f°. 116.

join his community.³⁴ It was after the famous mission at Saint-Germain that M. Olier signed the contract by which he was appointed Parish Priest of Saint-Sulpice. His predecessor received in exchange a benefice with which he was not satisfied, for he had hoped to obtain a more lucrative one, and accordingly began to think of taking forcible re-possession of his parish. His partisans took up arms, besieged the presbytery, drove out M. Olier and pursued him with swords in their hands. Saint Vincent, it is said, hastened to the rescue of his friend who was brought before Parliament, which ordered that the *cure* should be restored to the new Parish Priest. On that very day, the presbytery was again attacked and whilst the besiegers were striving to break down the doors and climb the walls, preparatory to setting the house on fire, a few companies of Guards arrived, sent by the Oueen.

This unfortunate incident was much talked of in Paris, and several high personages, and even princes of the blood and ministers of State, thinking that the community of Saint-Sulpice was an establishment of the Priests of the Mission, threw all the blame on Saint Vincent. He was reproached for the occurrence in public and even at the Council of Conscience. He could easily have defended himself by pointing out the mistake that was being made, but instead of doing so and allowing M. Olier to bear the brunt of the calumnies, which would have seemed to him an act of cowardice, he preferred to refute the direct charges brought against Saint-Sulpice.³⁵ These two holy priests frequently met, especially to combine forces against Jansenism and duelling, and to maintain the charitable works undertaken by the Daughters and Ladies of Charity in the parish of Saint-Sulpice.

Although the similar nature of men's works often leads to rivalry and jealousy, there was never the slightest disagreement between the two great reformers of the clergy. Saint Vincent praised the work of Saint-Sulpice on every possible occasion; he recommended it to an ecclesiastic as

³⁴ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 14.

³⁵ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 152; Vol. III, pp. 581-582; Collet, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 413.

' more capable ' than his own,³⁶ and to a lady as having no other end in view than the glory of God.³⁷ When Saint Vincent heard that M. Olier was dangerously ill, he at once paid a visit both to show his sympathy and to encourage the patient. He returned on April 2, 1657, and remained with the dying man until he had rendered his soul to God.³⁸

Whilst fully sharing the grief of the Sulpicians he strove to moderate it by a few words of consolation. M. de Bretonvilliers has preserved for us, if not the exact words, at least the gist of the Saint's little address which he gave to the community : 'I should have wished, my dear brethren,' he said, 'on beholding the affliction in which you are plunged at the death of your dear father, to render him back to you that he might wipe away your tears. As, however, I cannot restore him to you in the flesh. I thought it my duty to put before you his spirit, which is the better part of him. Earth holds his body, Heaven his soul; his spirit is for you, and if God has judged him worthy of admission to Paradise with His angels, you should not think it unfitting that he should have a place in your hearts. He would gladly have guitted his body, provided his spirit can abide with you, for that was his whole wish and desire throughout his life : after his death, it is in your power to make him happy. It was said in the law that if one brother died childless, the other should suscitare semen. Your father, whom I may also call your brother (on account of his age), has died, so to say, without children, bearing in mind his great desire to convert the whole world and to sanctify the clergy. He has left you his house, which is this holy house that he acquired by his blood and death, for he died in his desire to give it life. Raise up to him children who will make known Jesus Christ by assuring for Him, if it be possible, as many followers as there are men and by offering Him as many holy sacrifices as there are priests in the Church : Fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est.'39 He advised M. Olier's sons to preserve intact the works of their father, and especially

- ³⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 220.
- ³⁷ Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 175.
- ³⁸ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 475.
- ³⁹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 476.

the seminary of Saint-Sulpice. At their request he obtained permission from the Abbot of Saint-Germain⁴⁰ to preside over the meeting at which M. de Bretonvilliers was elected to succeed M. Olier, and he was the first to sign the deed of election.⁴¹ This meeting was not the only one at which he presided ; it was followed by others in which the means of carrying on M. Olier's institutions⁴² were debated in his presence and his advice was mainly responsible for the decisions then taken.

Death had removed M. Olier before he could realise a project on which he had meditated for more than three months; this was the foundation of a community of girls or widows consecrated to the inner life of Our Blessed Lady, which would admit ladies of rank amongst them to make a retreat in devout and peaceful surroundings. He had drawn up the rules and even obtained the assistance of Madame Tronson and Madame de Saujon, Lady-in-Waiting to the Duchess of Orleans, who had offered themselves to God with this intention on January 19, 1654, in the church of Notre-Dame. De Bretonvilliers felt bound to finish a work which the founder of Saint-Sulpice had begun, 43 and Saint Vincent encouraged him to do so. He was also consulted by Madame Saujon and he told her what a high idea he had of the work which, he wrote, 'I esteem, respect and praise as having been inspired by God to this holy man who is its author.'44 This letter is dated August 25, 1660, and on the 30th, Madame de Saujon, Mademoiselle d'Aubrai, a niece of M. Olier's, and some other ladies of rank met at the Rue Garancière, in a house that had recently been specially built for them, under the direction of Madame Tronson.

The community of Daughters of the Inner Life of the Most Blessed Virgin, or more briefly Daughters of the Blessed Virgin,

⁴⁰ The parish of Saint-Sulpice was under the Abbot's jurisdiction.

⁴¹ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 478.

42 Ibid., p. 583.

⁴³ On the community of the Daughters of the Blessed Virgin see : Remarques historiques sur l'église et la paroisse de Saint-Sulpice, Paris, 1773, in-12, pp. 241-250; Faillon, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 567-570. 44 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, pp. 393, 396.

had a brief existence. After Madame Tronson's death Madame de Saujon was elected Superioress, and during the nine years she held office, she showed that she had no qualifications for the position. She had disputes with M. de Bretonvilliers, followed by a lawsuit; she was deposed by the Archbishop, and in revenge she asked and obtained permission from the Court to have the little community suppressed. In this lamentable fashion a work, excellent in itself and one that Saint Vincent had praised and approved as that of a 'saintly man,' was destroyed by a proud and vindictive woman.

When he spoke of M. Olier he often used the word 'saint,' and after his death, he invoked the intercession of that devout servant of God, for he was convinced that his prayers were most efficacious before the throne of God.⁴⁵ This bond of affection between the two founders has always persisted between the two communities that they established. Saint-Sulpice venerates Saint Vincent de Paul in a very particular manner, and Saint-Lazare looks forward to the day when it may render M. Olier the honours accorded to one of the Church's saints.⁴⁶

Whilst M. Olier and Saint Vincent de Paul were working separately, in different ways, and at the head of different communities, for the reform of the clergy, they also collaborated in a society known as *The Company of the Blessed Sacrament*. During the past half-century only too much attention has been devoted to what has come to be known as 'The Devout Cabal,' sometimes to the detriment of our Saint ; we therefore feel bound to deal with this matter at greater length than we have done in other chapters of this work.

⁴⁵ Faillon, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 478, 582.

⁴⁶ Abelly had written a chapter for the life of Saint Vincent entitled: 'What M. Vincent did to assist the Abbé Olier in some of the latter's devout projects and enterprises.' The chapter was communicated to the Sulpicians and is still in their archives, but it did not see the light of day, no one knows why. Faillon first published it as an appendix to his *Life of M. Olier* (cf. Vol. I, p. 38).

CHAPTER LVIII

THE COMPANY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

T was in June, 1627, that Henry de Lévis, Duke of Ventadour, Peer of France, Lieutenant of the King in Languedoc, first conceived the idea of establishing an association open to laymen and ecclesiastics, the object of which should be 'to embrace zealously all sorts of good works, and to procure the glory of God in every possible way.' He proposed to succour the unfortunate, champion the rights of the oppressed, combat vice, defend the Catholic Church against error and impiety, and support all institutions created for charitable purposes or religious propaganda. A Capuchin father, Philip d'Angoumois, charmed by the beauty of the project, communicated his enthusiasm to Abbé de Grignan, afterwards Bishop of Uzès, and all three consulted together before God as to what means should be adopted to bring the design into being.

A scheme was drawn up and members recruited. It was essential that they should be trustworthy, discreet, wealthy or influential; amongst those persuaded to join were Henry de Pichery, Master of the Household in Ordinary to the King, Father Suffren, S.J., the King's and the Queen Mother's Confessor, Marquis d'Andelot, Lieutenant-General of the King in Champagne and his son Francis de Coligny, Gédéon de Vic, Marshal of the Camps, Renouard de Souvré, Hubert Carpentier, the future founder of the Calvarians, Conut de Brassac, subsequently French Ambassador at Rome, the Bishops of Bazas and Saint-Flour, Francis de Rochechouart, Lord of the Manor of Saint-Cyr, and M. de Saint-Pierre, brother of the Bishop of Langres. The Annals of the Company tell us that 'many ecclesiastics of great worth and piety'1 also joined, but give no further details.

The Bishop of Bazas was appointed director for three months, M. de Saint-Pierre, secretary, and the Company, thus constituted, began to meet and to carry out its plans in March 1630. One of the first resolutions adopted was that one member of the Company, selected by the director, should meditate every week on some mystery in the life of Jesus Christ, another should visit the Blessed Sacrament. and a third should pray for some public necessity.² It was decided to adopt the name of 'Company of the Blessed Sacrament,' that its coat-of-arms should be a Host in a Monstrance, its motto : ' Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar,' and that secrecy should be strictly The Company did not wish to be known to observed. outsiders, and hence it refused to print its rules, to admit ladies as members, or rather to form two separate bodies provided with similar constitutions, one for men and the other for women, and excluded members of all communities subject to a Superior General, because their rule to keep Superiors informed of their doings was contrary to the obligation of secrecy.³

The Company extended its activities so as to embrace all forms of charity and devotion. It was not indifferent to any need of soul or body; it concerned itself with the poor, with mendicants, prisoners, the sick, galley-slaves, the slaves in Barbary, persons condemned to death, women of loose life, apprentices and schools; during the troubled days of the Fronde, it came to the assistance of devastated provinces, of convents in distress, of nuns who had been dispersed and of refugees without resources; it made grants of money to the Daughters of Saint Mary Magdalen and to the institutions established by Mesdemoiselles de Lestang and de Pollalion. The Society of Foreign Missions and the General Hospital were also deeply indebted to the Company.

¹ Annales de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, Marseilles, 1900, quarto, p. 16. The 'Annales 'were published by Dom Beauchet-Filleau, O.S.B. The original is in the Bibl. Nat., ms. 14,489 of the French collection. Our references are to the printed text. ² Annales, p. 15. ³ Ibid., pp. 45-45, p. 17.

Whether it was a question of catechising the poor, converting Jews and heretics or countering their activities, of giving missions in the environs of Paris or in the Cevennes, of carrying the light of the true faith to the Hebrides, the Orkneys, China or Tonquin, putting an end to disorders occurring in churches or public places, punishing blasphemers or combatting duelling, its mysterious hand was always to be found. When the Company did not itself take the initiative, it supplied moral and financial support.

The ideal put forward by the Company of the Blessed Sacrament was of a nature to appeal to the hearts of all apostolic men, and hence the most prominent members of the secular clergy, of the army and of the magistracy became members. The 'Annals' of the Society provide us with a long list of names from which we shall select a few : amongst Superiors of Communities, those of Saint Vincent de Paul, Father de Condren and M. Olier ; amongst Bishops or future Bishops, those of Alain de Solminihac, Abelly, Brandon, Perrochel, Sevin, Godeau, Francis Fouquet, Cospeau, Bossuet and Pingré; amongst well-known ecclesiastics, those of Froger and Féret, each of whom was in turn Rector of Saint Nicholas-du-Chardonnet, Gambart, Louis de Chandenier, Francis Renar, Peter de Bérulle, Lawrence de Brisacier, Thomas le Gauffre, and Claude de Bampignon; amongst Marshals, those of de la Meilleraye and de Schomberg : amongst devout lavmen those of the Prince de Conti. the Duke of Liancourt, Baron de Renty, Elie Laisne de la Marguérie, William de Lamoignon, and Charles Maignart de Bernières.

The establishment of the Company in Paris was soon followed by that of branches in other cities; first Lyons, then Orléans, Angers, la Flèche and Aix; in 1660 more than fifty towns had branches governed by the same statutes as those of the capital.

Louis XIII, Queen Anne of Austria, Richelieu, the Nuncio Cardinal Bagni, bestowed on the Company marks of their goodwill. The Holy See sent a Brief of Indulgences, but as the Company was referred to in the document as a Confraternity, it preferred not to call any attention to these pontifical favours. John Francis de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, always showed himself cold and distrustful of the Association; he refused to give it the approbation for which it petitioned and not even the King's intervention could make him change his attitude.

Mazarin was not merely cold ; his feelings were those of hate and hostility ; a powerful Company that worked behind the scenes was of its very nature calculated to annoy him. He kept his eye on the Society, threatened it, prevented the enrolment of members, and did all in his power to discredit and destroy it. The extravagant zeal of many of its members, a certain number of trespasses on the rights of the hierarchy, and some disagreeable incidents, were adroitly and successfully used to discredit the Company, which, indeed, managed to survive the redoubtable minister, but in a weak and moribund condition, and only for five years. It was dissolved in 1666.

When Count Réné d'Argenson's Annales appeared in 1900, the remarkable parallelism between the decisions taken by the Company and the works attributed to Saint Vincent by his biographers was at once observed. This fact seemed to require some explanation and certain writers hastened to accuse Abelly of falsehood ; he had, so they contended, considerably exaggerated the charitable activities of ' Monsieur Vincent' in order to conceal those of the Company ; the Annales had at last enabled us to assign their respective shares to each.

Raoul Allier, Professor of the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Paris, in his work *The Cabal of the Devotees*,⁴ defended this thesis with considerable ability, but also with a certain amount of unpleasant prejudice in regard to Saint Vincent, whose initiative he considerably diminished in order to expand that of the celebrated Company. 'No doubt,' he writes,⁵ '... the apostle of charity was not merely an agent who carried out orders given by a committee. He was a member of that group of men who had been long and deeply disturbed by the sight of so much misery; to it he carried the cry of his compassionate heart, and he must in many instances have been the first to solicit

⁴ In-12, Paris, 1902. ⁵ La cabale des dévots, p. 139.

the mission with which they charged him. But behind him there was a certain number of men who did not always wait for his suggestions and appeals, who decided what measures should be taken, what efforts made, what plans of campaign carried out; now, as these men wished to remain in the shade, never to be made known, and as the public was always to be left in ignorance of their conspiracy to do good, the glory of the Saint—who, indeed, never dreamt of usurping the fame of others—has profited by the fact. Vincent de Paul is no longer a solitary figure surrounded by a halo; or rather the rays emanating from this halo no longer prevent us from distinguishing friends who were not simply faithful and docile collaborators, but occasionally inspirers and chiefs.'

No objection can be taken to this language in itself; it is when Raoul Allier begins to apply it that, in our view, he goes much too far. Shortly after the appearance of his book, a statement was made in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* that 'the facts so patiently put together and ingeniously commented upon by M. Allier' are 'worthy of consideration and calculated to lessen the idea we have hitherto entertained of the personal rôle of Saint Vincent de Paul.'⁶ Again Geoffroy de Grandmaison wrote : 'The Company of the Blessed Sacrament was at times the originator of the charitable activities of this great Saint, who was often its delegate rather than the direct agent of his own good works.'⁷

Is it really true that the knowledge which we now possess about the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, and which was hitherto unknown, serves to reveal Saint Vincent in a lesser and more ignoble light? We shall now proceed to seek an answer to this question.

We may observe in the first place that the Annals of the company of the Blessed Sacrament were written in 1694-1695

⁶ Un épisode de l'histoire religieuse du XVII^e siècle. La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, par A. Rébelliau, Revue des Deux Mondes, 73rd year, Vol. XVI, July 1903, p. 77.

⁷ La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, in the Correspondant, 83rd year, March 25, 1911, p. 1105. We might also refer to Alexandre Feron's La vie et les œuvres de Ch. Maignart de Bernières, Rouen, 1931, oct., pp. 220 and foll. by Count Réné de Voyer d'Argenson, with the avowed object of interesting Louis Anthony de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, in the suppressed association, in the hope that the prelate would contribute to its restoration, and that they are not, in the strict sense of the word, an historical work, for the historical element is subordinate to the apologetic aim which the Count had in view. It would, therefore, be illogical to prefer Réné d'Argenson's statements to those of Abelly on the ground that the latter is an apologist of Saint Vincent and not an historian. If we bear in mind the object which the Count had in view when he wrote his book, we may legitimately conclude that the author of the *Annals* showed the Company in its most favourable light by attributing to it undertakings with which it either had nothing or very little to do.

This idea is further confirmed when the work is studied in the light of documentary evidence. M. Croulbois has dealt with this point in connection with the Company of the Society for Foreign Missions. 'It is part of Voyer d'Argenson's apologetical plan,' he writes,⁸ 'to attribute to the Company all works in which its members participated.' He also calls attention to the more or less deliberately erroneous statements that cannot but augment our mistrust.⁹

If we bear in mind the character of the Annals and the sources of information at the disposal of the author which were the authentic manuscript minutes of the Company's meetings, it may be laid down as a guiding principle that any work, the origin of which he does not attribute to the Company, was not begun by it. This is a point which has not been sufficiently grasped by certain historians. Instead of curtailing, they expand; instead of reducing facts to their true proportions, they exaggerate, and at last we see the Company of the Blessed Sacrament wherever we turn. The 'Cabal' holds in its hands the invisible threads that govern the actions of great reformers, bishops, priests and

⁸ L'intrigue romaine de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, in the Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature religieuse, Sept.-Oct. 1904, Vol. IX, No. 5, p. 402, note 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 403, 415, 545, note 3.

even political personages.¹⁰ To increase the prestige of the Company, they add to its members persons whom Voyer d'Argenson did not know, or at any rate, whom he did not mention. For instance, at one of the Company's meetings, the brethren decided that some missions should be given by the priests of Saint-Lazare. As they were unable to settle some details themselves, and as Saint Vincent was absent from Paris, they invited his assistant, Father Lambert, to attend and to supply the requisite information.¹¹ From this simple incident the conclusion has been drawn that Father Lambert was also a member of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, and the decision arrived at by the brethren in 1633 has been ignored. Now it is certain that Father Lambert, who in 1633 was a young unknown priest, was not a member of the Company which in that year, by the first article of its statutes, rigorously excluded every member of a community from admission to the Company. Was the secrecy adopted by the Company so absolute that it never consented, even in case of necessity, to reveal its proceedings to outsiders on whose discretion it could rely? If the rule was so strict, the Association would have had to abandon all hope of recruiting new members.

Here is another instance. If the name of the great Bishop of Alet, Nicholas Pavillon, was absent from the Company's muster roll, then, indeed, a glorious name would be missing. Hence it was added without the slightest hesitation, though it is not mentioned even once by the author of the *Annals*. Raoul Allier¹² asserts that the *Annals* never mention the

¹⁰ Saint Vincent wrote : 'I have just come away from an important meeting at which His Grace the Archbishop of Reims presided.' (Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 398.) It is taken for granted that this was a meeting of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament; no further questions are asked, but such a conclusion is much too rash. Why not a meeting of the Ladies of Charity? At the date given at the head of the letter (June 13, 1652) this prelate was not as yet a member of the Company (see Annales, p. 137) and Saint Vincent himself tells us (Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 197) that on May 19, 1651, the Archbishop had presided at a meeting of the Ladies held to concert measures of relief for the devastated provinces.

11 Annales, pp. 43-45.

¹² Raoul Allier, op. cit., p. 35, note 1. VOL. III.—T prelate because the name of a Jansenist would have created an unfavourable impression. This argument is really worthless, because other Jansenists, and notorious ones at that, such as the Duke of Liancourt, are given. Furthermore, Louis Anthony de Noailles, for whom the *Annals* were intended, was not a man to be dismayed by such a trifle, for during the whole course of his episcopate he showed himself most friendly to the Jansenist cause and would have been quite charmed to come across Pavillon's name in the course of his reading.

There is no doubt that Saint Vincent belonged to the Company of the Blessed Sacrament. Our authorities for this statement are Father Caset, a member of the Congregation of the Mission, and Count d'Argenson, the author of the Annals. On November 21, 1660, Father Caset wrote to Father Alméras : 'On one occasion I asked a Parisian of noble birth and remarkable piety how it was that M. Vincent had been admitted to the Confraternity¹³ of the Blessed Sacrament, since all persons belonging to a community, either of seculars or of regulars, were excluded from membership; he told me that it was because M. Vincent never schemed nor spoke on behalf of his own, whereas others did all in their power to procure all that they possibly could for their community.¹⁴

It is certain that Saint Vincent was already a member of the Company on July 16, 1637, for he was present at a meeting held on that day; he was even entrusted with the duty, in co-operation with some 'ecclesiastical confrères,' of discovering some means to prevent scandalous priests from celebrating Mass in the churches of Paris. In accordance with 'his opinion ' the *Annals* tell us¹⁵ 'a very careful examination was made of all priests in the city, and as far as was possible, all those found to be giving scandal were excluded from the ministry of the altar.' The Saint, therefore, was not at this time a new arrival in the ranks of the Company. The decision taken by the members in 1633 no longer to admit persons belonging to a community even of

¹³ Instead of ' Company.'

 ¹⁴ The original of this letter is in the Archives of the Mission.
 ¹⁵ p. 74.

secular priests, and the assurance given by the Annalist that this rule was rigorously observed, 16 would seem to show that Saint Vincent had joined the Company before that date. The nature of the business transacted at the meetings from 1630 onwards, in particular its efforts on behalf of the galleys and galley-slaves, would go to show that he was one of those 'ecclesiastics of great merit' who were admitted to membership in the very first year of the Society's existence. As against this, the author of La cabale des dévots alleges d'Argenson's silence. 'D'Argenson,' he writes, 17 'mentions the name of the Saint for the first time only in 1635. That is quite true, but we must not forget that d'Argenson never gives a list of the members who were present at the meetings, and very rarely mentions those who took an active part in the discussions; and that the names of several members are only mentioned long after they have joined the ranks of the Company.

Raoul Allier also objects that when, in 1634, Madame Goussault proposed to Saint Vincent to establish the Society of the Ladies of Charity, in all probability, he adds, at the instigation of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, the Saint was ignorant of the members' design, and only accepted the proposal after much hesitation. But apart from the fact that there is nothing to prove or even to establish the semblance of a probability that the Company had anything to do with Madame Goussault's proceeding, or that Saint Vincent was ignorant of the members' design, we fail to see how from the fact that he hesitated the conclusion can be drawn that he was not as yet a member of the Company.

One may easily guess the part played by Saint Vincent de Paul as a member of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament. He brought to it all his gifts of mind and heart, his immense love of the poor and the Church, his ardent desire to labour efficaciously for the glory of God, his wide experience of men, his power to see clearly the best and most suitable remedies for all human needs, and his genius for organisation. He also brought to it all the advantages accruing from his relations with persons in high station and the various groups under his command. When the Company

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 114. ¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 51.

of the Blessed Sacrament was established, some of his great foundations were already in existence : the first confraternity of Charity dates from 1617; the Congregation of the Mission from 1625; the retreats for ordinands from 1628, and subsequent foundations such as the Daughters and Ladies of Charity, the Tuesday Conferences and the seminaries, were simply developments and expansions of the former.

If he brought much to the Company, he was also certain of finding in it, thanks to the number, diffusion, position and wealth of its members, a most valuable financial and moral support.

It is obviously an exaggeration to say either that Saint Vincent only carried out the decisions of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, or that the Company only took action under his inspiration. It would be equally illogical to assert that a work is not due to the Saint's initiative simply because the Company began it. The Company was only a reality in virtue of the numbers that went to compose it. and Vincent de Paul was one of its members. The decisions of the Company were the decisions of the members, and those who were best able to win the adhesion of their fellows exerted most influence; it seems quite natural to attribute whatever initiative was taken to those members who, by their position, functions, relations or habitual preoccupations, were best able to form a sound judgement on the utility of the measures proposed. There are good reasons for thinking that when the Company resolved to support works under Saint Vincent's direction, such as that for the galley-slaves, 18 the captives in Barbary, 19 and the Missions to Ireland and Scotland, 20 it had listened to his pleadings and allowed itself to be convinced by his heart-felt eloquence.

The author of the Annals tells us that the measures adopted in 1637 for the removal from the churches of Paris of bad priests who were accustomed to celebrate Mass there with scandalous independence, were taken 'at the suggestion of M. Vincent.²¹ He also acknowledges that the Company relied on Saint Vincent in 1649 for ways and means to

18	Annales, pp. 18, 54.	¹⁹ <i>Ibid.</i> , pp. 135, 144.
20	Ibid., p. 135.	²¹ Ibid., p. 74.

combat efficaciously the profound ignorance, as far as the teachings of the Christian religion are concerned, in which the rural population of the districts around Paris were then living. 22

It should not be thought that, in cases where the Company decided on a new undertaking which was not, indeed, due to Saint Vincent's initiative, but which was left to him to be carried out, his merit is thereby in any way diminished. His biographers have never concealed from us that even where his greatest works are concerned, the first suggestions came from outsiders. They tell us, for instance, that the idea of establishing a congregation to preach the Gospel to the poor in country places came from the devout Madame de Gondi, and that he had to submit to repeated assaults from Madame Goussault before he made up his mind to establish a society of ladies to assist the sick in the Hôtel-Dieu. Nor are we unaware of the fact that on many occasions he simply carried out decisions arrived at by the Ladies of Charity, especially in all that concerned the foundlings, nor that he willingly followed the advice of Saint Louise de Marillac. Why, then, should we have a less lofty idea of his virtue and genius when we learn that he had yet another adviser in the Company of the Blessed Sacrament? We were not aware until recently that it was in response to the appeals of the Company that he sent his Missionaries to La Chapelle, 23 to the hospital and asylum known as 'Les Petites Maisons,'24 to Brie-Comte-Robert²⁵ and elsewhere ;²⁶ now that we do know it, does such information diminish our esteem for the Saint?

Even when Vincent de Paul did carry out schemes devised by others, he never allowed himself to be used as the blind tool of any man or any group of men; he was always at one and the same time the architect, builder and mason of

²² Ibid., p. 58.

²³ Ibid., p. 82; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XXXV, p. 166; Bk. II, Ch. XI, Sect. I, p. 386.

²⁴ Cf. Annales, p. 83; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. III, Sect. III,

p. 257. 25 Cf. Annales, p. 109; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 293. ²⁶ Annales, pp. 58, 83, 107, 109.

each of his undertakings. It needed no great intellectual ability for him to see that ' the country people are scandalously neglected : that they are being lost for want of priests to go and teach them the truths of salvation and bring them the sacraments; as the religious communities already in existence refuse to have anything to do with them, establish one; here is the money needed to do so.' But what an amazing amount of difficulties had he not to overcome to train this body of Missionaries which had already spread, in his own lifetime, through France, Italy, Great Britain, Ireland, Poland, Barbary and Madagascar; to infuse into it a spirit capable of vivifying it for centuries, despite the profound disturbances that took place in society and the persecutions that were unceasingly renewed. If Vincent de Paul had, as a matter of fact, acted spontaneously without waiting for Madame de Gondi's suggestion, would he be a whit more worthy of our love and admiration? The fact that Saint Vincent acted as a delegate of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament in some of his undertakings in no way lessens his glory.

We must not think Saint Vincent approved of all the resolutions arrived at in the Company's meetings. He would most certainly have fought with all his might against certain decisions that were by no means in conformity with his usual mode of action. He never liked coercion in any shape or form. Hence, when the brethren of the Company asked him to imprison at Saint-Lazare vagabond priests who were not ashamed to dishonour their sacred character by living on alms, 27 he did not consent to the proposal without manifesting his repugnance to it. Again, it was also in his despite that the project of forcibly incarcerating poor mendicants in the General Hospital was adopted.²⁸ He certainly would never have approved of the repressive measures which the Company called on the civil power to adopt against Hugue-By nature and by temperament he was always in nots. favour of mild measures, convinced as he was that the best way to win men's minds is to capture their hearts; this is the method which he always and everywhere recommended in

²⁷ Annales, pp. 74, 75. ²⁸ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XLV, p. 216.

his letters and discourses, and this is the method, as Abelly tells us, of which he was the first to set an example.²⁹

The Company, or at any rate its founder, the Duke of Ventadour, had formed a design of establishing a Congregation to be known as the 'Missionaries of the Indies.' The title 'Missionaries' was displeasing to Saint Vincent because, as we have seen, regrettable confusions might arise, since his own priests also bore the name. He recommended his agent in Rome to keep a close eye on the matter.³⁰

The secrecy with which the Company enveloped its proceedings, the mistrust in which it was held both by the Archbishop of Paris and Cardinal Mazarin were not calculated to make Saint Vincent love it any the more, for he always acted openly where his own institutions were concerned, and never failed to show the authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, the respect that was their due; hence, it would not be surprising if, for some years before his death, he ceased to attend the meetings of the Company. A fact that would lead one to believe this supposition to be true is that his decease is not even referred to in the *Annals*, although the death of persons of far lesser importance, such as Brandon, Bishop of Périgueux, Olier, the founder of Saint-Sulpice, Alain de Solminihac, Bishop of Cahors and Louis de Chandenier, Abbé de Tournus, are recorded.

However this may be, those who represent Saint Vincent as a blindly devoted member of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, recruiting new members from amongst his disciples,³¹ and selecting new bishops from its associates,³² as well as those who say that he, like so many others, was a victim of political ambition, quite ready to be ' the visible

²⁹ Op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XII, pp. 181-182. Raoul Allier with the aid of some skilfully selected texts endeavours to prove (op. cit., pp. 269-270) that Saint Vincent was no less intolerant than the Company of the Blessed Sacrament. It would be quite easy to bring forward texts bearing a contrary sense and to show, by placing facts in their true setting, that those employed by Allier by no means exclude a wise breadth of mind.

⁸⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, pp. 292 and foll.

³¹ Raoul Allier, op. cit., p. 35, note.

³² Ibid., p. 34.

arm of the invisible devotees '33 in political and State affairs. would, we believe, alter their views if they were more fully informed. It would even be quite easy to show, if this were the place to do so, that Saint Vincent only took part in political affairs with the utmost reluctance, and always with a charitable object in view. How could his heart remain indifferent when he saw a state of public misery of such terrifying dimensions that we to-day cannot think of it without a shudder, spreading from man to man and decimating whole provinces, as the result of the Fronde? And if, convinced as he was, like so many others, that Mazarin's retirement was the means best calculated to restore peace to the country and to put an end to the innumerable evils from which the people were suffering ; if, fully persuaded of this, he went, despite his repugnance, to Oueen Anne of Austria to ask her to dismiss her minister, was that the act of a man urged by the passion of political intrigue, or that of an upright and honourable man tormented by a desire to solace the misfortunes of his fellow-citizens by removing the cause of their evils?

No, Saint Vincent was not the arm of the Company in its political designs, and if at times he was its arm where charitable enterprises were concerned, he was much more frequently its inspirer. Far be it from us to try to diminish in any way the large amount of good effected by the Company. We freely admit this Society was a marvellous instrument in the hands of Providence in assisting once more to raise up France, during an epoch in which all manner of plagues were falling on her simultaneously. If we do not approve either its far too bitter intolerance towards Huguenots or its anxiety to envelop itself in an atmosphere of mystery, we admire its zeal for the Catholic religion and for the welfare of the poor and afflicted, and we regret that the civil power, jealous of its influence, brought about its dissolution, perhaps out of annovance when it found it could not manage the Company as it chose, and thus dried up the source of much good from which the State would certainly have benefited. But neither our admiration for the Com-

³³ Rebelliau, Le rôle politique et les survivances de la Compagnie secrète du Saint-Sacrement, in the Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol. LIV, Nov. 1909, p. 209.

pany nor our desire to show its importance will ever lead us to exaggerate the sum total of its works by unjustly diminishing the status of men who also deserved well of the Church and society.

Everybody does not experience scruples such as these. Able writers have striven to show that the inception of most of the charitable enterprises of this period was due to the Company, and especially those which the biographers of Vincent de Paul attribute to that great man. Abelly, who was one of its members, and in addition, an intimate friend of the Saint, was in a far better position to tell us of the part played by the man who has justly earned the title of 'The Apostle of Charity.'

In the case of the establishment of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, of the foundation of the General Hospital, of the assistance rendered to galley-slaves, of the help afforded slaves in Barbary, or of any other of his creations, the part which he played has certainly not been exaggerated, as the different chapters of this work, devoted to a study of these subjects, have abundantly shown.

If the proceedings of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament be estimated at their true value, stripped of all the baseless affirmations and faulty reasonings with which they have been amplified, then Saint Vincent de Paul emerges in no way diminished. He will always retain his place in the foremost rank of men who deserve the gratitude and admiration of humanity for the might of their genius, the nobility of their views, the generosity of their devotedness and the extent of the services they have rendered the poor, the sick, the down-trodden, the abandoned, and in general, to all who suffer and are in want. If the veil with which Saint Vincent in his humility concealed his good deeds were to fall, he would no doubt leave the pedestal on which history has placed him but only to ascend to one still more elevated.

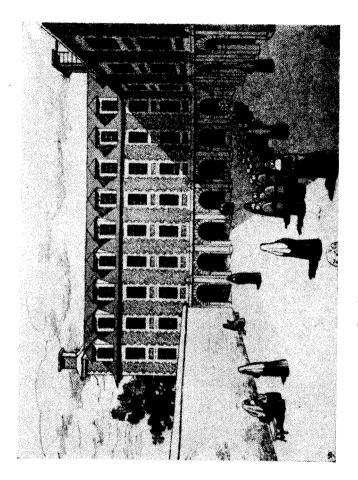
Amongst the great works the inception of which was mainly due to the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, it would be unjust not to assign a foremost place to the Society of Foreign Missions. It is only fitting that we should say a few words about it here, for Saint Vincent also had a share in this foundation.

CHAPTER LIX

THE SOCIETY OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

HE Society of Foreign Missions was another of the great enterprises that first saw the light in seventeenthcentury France. Scarcely had the Congregation de Propaganda been established than it made the training and formation of a native clergy part of its programme. This project could not be realised unless bishops were sent to foreign countries, and Propaganda at once began to think of doing so. Portugal, however, had to be considered, for its King enjoyed ample prerogatives of which he would not tolerate the slightest infringement. He had the right of presentation to bishoprics and benefices in all countries that had been or that would be won from infidels in the old world. Every Missionary sent to the Indies (the reader is aware of the wide meaning attached to this word in the seventeenth century) was bound to sail from a Portuguese The Kings of Portugal, instead of aiming at the port. welfare of the Church, allowed themselves to be influenced by national interests, so that their protection, instead of serving for the propagation of the faith, constituted a hindrance to the liberty and fruitfulness of the Church's apostolic mission.

The addresses and conversations of the Jesuit Father Alexander Rhodes, a Cochin-China Missionary who had returned to Europe to collect alms and fellow-helpers, aroused public opinion and set up a current of sympathy in favour of missions in the Far East. Petitions were sent to Rome covered with signatures. Saint Vincent added his to those of the Archbishop of Rheims, Baron de Montbard, the parish priest of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, and others, at the foot of the following letter addressed to Propaganda in 1653: 'Having learned of the surprising progress



THE " MADELONETTE " CONVENT

of the Christian Faith in the Kingdom of Tonquin and Cochin-China, we have felt our hearts burn with an ardent desire to go to the relief of these people who are buried in the darkness of error and are now beginning to hear the call of Jesus Christ the Sun of Justice. We are firmly convinced that an indispensable condition for success is the despatch without any delay of two or three bishops to evangelise, and above all to ordain priests in this nascent Church ; for the number of priests there is so few that many of the faithful die daily without the sacraments—a deplorable fact that should be immediately remedied.

'To obviate, as far as we can do so, such a great evil we earnestly beg Your Most Eminent Lordship to be good enough to devote serious thought to the sending of some bishops to these countries. We have here in Paris at present three chosen priests, of well-known probity and utterly devoted to this hard and difficult cause, who are ready to undertake for Christ's sake a journey full of dangers, and to labour all their life without respite in these distant lands.

'Fixed and permanent sources of revenue for their maintenance have been collected. If you judge it fitting, these funds shall be sent to Avignon,¹ for the devout persons who have liberally assisted this good work with their worldly possessions willingly agree to do so, and promise to have the money sent there. It is their formal intention that these revenues shall be exclusively reserved for missionaries who labour in the above-mentioned places, and that no part of them shall be allotted to those who remain in Europe or who return there.'²

The three priests who were prepared to expatriate themselves for the salvation of infidels were Francis Pallu, a Canon of Tours; Pique, a doctor of the Sorbonne, and Francis de Laval-Montigny, Archdeacon of Evreux.

The amount of alms collected was enough to ensure an income of 1,800 livres to the future bishops ; the money was subscribed in part by the Ladies of Charity, whose zeal was aroused both by Saint Vincent and the Duchess of Aiguillon.

Two months previously the same petitioners had written to

¹ Avignon was at that time under the Pope's authority.

² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 11.

Pope Innocent X begging to have bishops in partibus appointed to Tonquin and Cochin-China; in this way they believed they could elude the intervention of the King of Portugal, whose rights were only recognised for the nomination of bishops enjoying the powers and the title of Ordinary.³

This plan interfered with certain vested interests; under pressure from the King of Portugal and certain religious Orders, who claimed for themselves a sort of monopoly to the evangelisation of the Far East, Propaganda hesitated and ultimately filed the petition.

Another letter addressed to Rome in April 1655, by the General Assembly of the Clergy of France, also remained without effect. Pallu returned to Tours; de Laval retired with de Bernières-Louvigny to a hermitage at Caen; and Pique accepted the Parish of Saint-Josse in Paris.

The Duchess of Aiguillon, however, never lost confidence; she recommended the project in letters to Cardinal Bagni and to other members of the Sacred College, and she urged Pallu, when she heard he was in Rome, to leave no stone unturned to obtain a favourable reply from the Pope and from Propaganda. Pallu and four or five other French priests were accorded an audience by Alexander VII; they all offered themselves to the Sovereign Pontiff to be employed for the evangelisation of the Indies in whatever way he judged best. The Pope was deeply moved ; he praised their zeal highly and said : 'I should like to be in a position to do the same thing; formerly, before I became what I now am, I felt moved to ask to be sent on the foreign mission, but what prevented me from doing so were the words I had read in a book of the Blessed Francis de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva : "Ask nothing and refuse nothing."'4 However, a Commission of four Cardinals was appointed to study the whole question of vicariate apostolics in the Far East. Pallu plucked up courage, and whilst his companions returned to France, he remained in Rome, in the house of the Priests of the Mission,⁵ waiting for the result of the negotiations which he believed would be quickly concluded. Father Jolly, the Superior, brought all his influence to bear

- ³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 623.
- ⁴ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 424. ⁵ Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 593.

on the prelates and Cardinals whom he knew on behalf of Francis Pallu.

Meanwhile, in Paris, another priest, Peter Lambert de la Motte,⁶ who also felt called to evangelise the heathen, kept up a round of visits to the most influential personages in order to stimulate their interest in the enterprise. He had several interviews with Saint Vincent before and during the retreat which he made at Saint-Lazare.⁷ The Saint approved of his resolution and advised him to go to Rome to assist Pallu, who was beginning to lose courage. The most powerful member of the opposition was Mgr. Mario Alberici, the Secretary of Propaganda itself; if he could be won over, victory was assured. It was very difficult to obtain an audience, but by dint of importunities, Lambert succeeded. He explained his position and dissipated all prejudices.

When the Commission of Cardinals reported favourably, Propaganda proposed to nominate Pallu and Lambert Vicars Apostolic in the China Missions and in those of adjacent countries. Alexander VII, on August 17, 1658, gave Pallu the title of Bishop of Heliopolis, and Lambert that of Bishop of Beryta, both *in partibus infidelium*. The third Vicar Apostolic was not appointed until two years later, when the parish priest of Saint Mary Magdalen at Aix. Cotolendi, was nominated Bishop of Metellopolis, *in partibus*.

The Ladies of Charity, and in particular the Duchess of Aiguillon, Madame de Miramion and Madame Fouquet now added to their former generous gifts. Madame de Miramion placed her castle, de la Couarde, in the commune of Galluis, ten leagues distant from Paris, at the disposal of the Vicars Apostolic. It was here they passed the eighteen months that preceded their departure, together with twenty ecclesiastics who were prepared to accompany them.

It was absolutely essential to have an organisation that would help to supply further missionaries, take charge of their temporal affairs and establish a centre of relations between the missions and Paris. To deal with these needs, a seminary was therefore set up in Paris with the collaboration

⁶ His life has been written by Henri de Frondeville (Pierre Lambert de la Motte, in 4° Paris, s.d.).

7 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, p. 538.

of several priests who were its directors, and two laymen, de Garibal, Baron of Saint-Sulpice and Master of Requests, and Voyer d'Argenson, Count of Rouffiac. In this way the Society of Foreign Missions was begun; a society, be it observed, and not a congregation, for each priest depended solely on his Vicar Apostolic, and the Vicars Apostolic had no other superior than the Pope. If the founders had asked to establish a congregation, it is very probable that their petition would have been refused, or so Saint Vincent thought.⁸

He encouraged the founders of this glorious Society and rendered them every service in his power, either directly or indirectly, through Father Jolly and the Ladies of Charity. From the moment that he saw that it was one of God's works, he became entirely devoted to it; he could refuse it nothing, and in fact, never did so.⁹ When an opportunity presents itself of serving our Divine Master and of extending His Kingdom, a saint will always be at hand and we are now about to see how Vincent de Paul belongs to the true line of God's saints.

⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, pp. 538, 621.

⁹ Most of the information contained in the preceding pages on the Society of the Foreign Missions has been taken from the *Histoire Générale de la Société des Missions Etrangères*, by Adrien Launaym, 3 vols. in 8°, 1894, Vol. I.

CHAPTER LX

THE SAINT

HE life of a saint is a life of renunciation, because self-denial is an indispensable condition for finding God and helping one's neighbour. The ego holds a very small place in the minds of the saints; honours, wealth, pleasure, reputation, comfort, in short, all that human nature seeks after, do not interest them. Their desires do not reach out towards selfish satisfactions which are gladly sacrificed to higher and nobler ends.

Wealth as such had no attraction for Saint Vincent de He believed that a disciple of Jesus Christ who Paul. was poor should love what Jesus Christ loved, and, like his Master, should be poorly fed, clad, lodged and furnished. Whenever he was told that there was no money in the house, his joy presented an amusing contrast to the bursar's dismay; 'What good news !' he used to say, 1' now is the time for us to show if we have confidence in God.' He showed no eagerness to accept the Priory of Saint-Lazare when it was offered to him by Adrian le Bon, and he was resigned and even glad when told that he had lost a valuable farm at Orsigny; he never took advantage of his position on the Council of Conscience to enrich either himself or the communities he governed. His disinterestedness was always and on every occasion perfect. Sometimes when travelling in the country, he found himself without any money; on such occasions he delighted to beg his bread, for the love of God, at the door of some poor labouring man.² He loved poverty for his Missionaries as well as for himself; he once asked the Superior of a house who had explained that he was without any resources :

¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. III, p. 13.

² Ibid., op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVIII, p. 274.

'What do you do, sir, when necessities fail you? Do you have recourse to God?'

'Yes. sometimes.'

'Well, that is the real advantage of poverty; it makes us raise our hearts to God; if we were well provided for, we might perhaps not think of Him at all.'

'But,' said the Superior, disappointed at this reply, 'you give things to other poor people and do nothing for your own children.'

' May God forgive you for saying so ! We shall never be richer than when we resemble Our Lord.'3

Saint Vincent spoke from experience; he could have named more than one community that had lost its primitive spirit through riches; the love of work had vanished with the possession of benefices. Examples such as these terrified him. 'Woe,' he said to his disciples, 4 ' woe to the Missionary whose heart is set on the perishable goods of this world ! For he will be ensnared by them, he will be pricked by these thorns and entangled in their toils ! If such a misfortune were to befall the Company, what would its members then say and how would they act? They would say : "We have so many thousand livres income and we should take our ease. What is the good of running around through these villages? Why work so hard? Let us leave the poor country people just as they are ; let their own priests look after them, if they care to do so ; let us live a quiet easy life, without bothering ourselves too much."' Loss of zeal, idleness and hence neglect and abandonment of souls were the evils that Saint Vincent feared might befall his priests if they were not safeguarded by poverty. This was the motive of his love for abandonment to God's Providence, an abandonment unknown to those who are in need of nothing. Uncertainty for the coming day raises men's hearts to God by leading them to offer up fervent prayers to their Creator.

Saint Vincent placed honours and riches on the same level. 'There never was an ambitious man,' said an ecclesiastic,⁵ ' with a greater passion for pride of place, renown and

⁴ Ibid., p. 275. ⁵ Ibid., Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 201.

³ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVIII, p. 276.

honours than that of this humble servant of God for selfhumiliation, for making himself wretched and contemptible in the sight of others and for embracing the most painful slights and humiliations.' It is not enough to say that he did not seek after honours; he positively fled from them. If at times compelled to accept them, he waited patiently for an opportunity to get rid of them. This detachment enabled him to follow his conscience more freely when, at the Council of Conscience, Mazarin proposed unworthy or incompetent candidates for benefices. The opposition which he never ceased from exercising against the powerful minister's designs was bound to lead to his exclusion from the Council. and in fact did so, for Mazarin was accustomed to greater pliancy. The day on which his name was struck from the roll of members of the Council was one of the most glorious in his life. There was a rumour in Saint Vincent's life-time that Oueen Anne of Austria intended to ask for a Cardinal's hat for him; if it is true that the Queen wished to do so, we need have no doubt that the chief obstacle to her design came from the man for whom she wished to obtain this great honour.⁶ It would have been easy, seeing the ascendancy he exercised over the Queen, to have attained positions of the highest dignity, but such an idea never occurred to him; he regarded the post of Superior General of a young and nascent congregation as far too honourable, and begged to resign it at the General Assembly of 1642. His request was, as we know, refused. Even the honour attaching to his sacerdotal character terrified him, and in his old age, he was heard to say that if he could live his life over again, he would have remained a layman.

His position of Superior General entitled him to special consideration from his subordinates; he tolerated such marks of respect as he could not personally avoid, but exercised his authority by suppressing others, such as an elevated stall in Choir and richer vestments in which to officiate. Some thought it only fitting that his confrères should salute him with a slight inclination of the head as he passed through the corridors of Saint-Lazare; this displeased

⁶ Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. XXXVII, p. 175; Bk. III, Ch. XIII, p. 200.

VOL. III.---U

him, and at his request, the practice was dropped. He envied the lay-brothers who were employed in the lowliest menial offices ; on more than one occasion he served in the refectory and worked in the kitchen. The venerable old man was accustomed to kneel at the feet of young, newlyordained priests for their blessing⁷ and also did so when asking pardon of those whom he had annoved or disedified. A brother at Saint-Lazare was told one day to prepare a room for a poor passing guest; he made a bad-tempered reply, and Saint Vincent at once used the firm tone of the man who means to be obeyed. Some persons happened to be looking on and the Saint knelt before them on one of the garden paths to ask pardon for his quickness of temper. In the evening, after the general examination of conscience, he called the brother to his room, as he did not wish to go to bed without once again asking the brother's pardon and kissing One fast-day, he entered an inn and sat down to his feet. table with the brother who was his companion. Some drysalted cod was placed before them and it was not an appetising sight. He asked for a little oil to flavour the fish ; it was produced and he was immediately filled with remorse at his act of greediness and the bad example he had given. When the meal was over he threw himself at the astonished brother's feet to ask his forgiveness. On another occasion he was accompanied by three of his own priests and was led on to relate some incident or other in his past life. They were listening with the greatest attention when he suddenly stopped, beat his breast and said : 'Always talking about myself, what a shame ! Pray forgive me; I am nothing but a wretched man, full of pride and haughtiness.' At the end of the journey he knelt before his confrères who were edified by his wonderful humility.8

A man so much inclined to self-depreciation did not pay a great deal of attention to fame or reputation. Saint Vincent detested praise; all who lived with him were well aware of the fact; but strangers sometimes needed to be taught a lesson. A postulant brother, speaking at a repetition of prayer, said: 'I am ashamed at having profited so little by

⁸ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, pp. 206–207.

⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, pp. 212-214.

the good example of M. Vincent, and by the wonderful things I observe in him.' One may imagine the impression produced on the Saint who, however, did not interrupt but waited until it was his turn to speak before calling attention to the remark that had shocked him : 'Brother,' he said, 'we have a custom here of never praising anyone in his presence. I am, indeed, a wonder, but a wonder of wickedness worse than the demon, and I deserve to be lower in Hell than he is. I am not exaggerating when I say this.'9

Saint Vincent had frequently only himself to blame when he was praised by others, for, without wishing it, his very words led men to praise him. A bishop, after listening to the Saint referring to himself as a great sinner, said : 'Do not talk like that; you are a perfect Christian.' 'What ! my Lord,' was his reply, ' I, a perfect Christian ! Say rather a lost soul and the greatest sinner in the universe.' A beggarwoman addressed him as ' My Lord,' no doubt hoping to get a larger alms; 'O my poor woman,' he replied, 'you know very little about me; I am only a swine-herd and the son of a poor villager.' Another woman claimed a special right to an alms because, as she said, she had once been a servant maid with 'Madame, your mother.' He answered her at once : ' My good woman, you are mistaking me for somebody else : my mother never had a servant-maid ; she worked herself, for she was the wife, and I am the son, of a peasant.' A young man arrived at Saint-Lazare to see a missionary who was a relative. He was taken to Saint Vincent's room and did not dare to sit down or keep on his hat; the Saint relieved his embarrassment by saving : 'Pray why, sir, do you display so much ceremony and feel so abashed in the presence of a swine-herd and the son of a poor peasant such as I am?' One day, after a conversation with a nobleman, who stood up to accompany Saint Vincent to the door, the latter protested : 'Pray, sir, do not disturb yourself ; do you not know that I am the son of a poor man and that I shepherded flocks in the fields in my youth ? ' ' David,' was the reply, ' was also a shepherd before he became one of the greatest kings in the world.'10

⁹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 119; Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 203.
 ¹⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, pp. 203–205.

If a person of rank or condition manifested his esteem for the Saint, by asking for his advice or otherwise, he always began his reply with a few humble words; he wrote, for instance, to the Vicar General of Bayonne, who had consulted him :¹¹ "Alas! Sir, how you shame the son of a poor peasant who tended flocks and herds and who is still both ignorant and vicious by asking for his opinion! I shall nevertheless obey, like the poor ass that once spoke out of obedience to Him who had authority over it.' He used this language so habitually that his contemporaries, as Abelly tells us, regarded him as 'a little odd ' on this point.¹²

A student at Saint-Lazare once went to tell the Saint that he was tempted to despair. Saint Vincent reasoned with him, calmed his fears, and then added: 'If the devil brings this bad thought again before your mind, just use the reply I have given you, and tell the miserable tempter that it was Vincent, an ignorant man, who told you so.' A Missionary once complained that his Superior's manners were bad; Saint Vincent, after praising the latter's virtue, went on to say: 'And now just consider me ! and how people have borne with me in the office I hold, I who am the most rustic, ridiculous and foolish of all those with whom persons of importance have to deal, and who cannot utter six words together without letting them see that I have neither brains nor judgement.' A peasant came to Saint-Lazare for an interview, and was told that the 'Saint was engaged with a number of noblemen and that he would have to wait.' 'Well, it cannot be M. Vincent,' said the man, 'because he told me that he was the son of a peasant just like myself.'13 Whenever his works were praised, he attributed all the merit to God; he regarded himself as an instrument, a wretched instrument of which God had been pleased to make use the better to show forth His divine power, 'a booby,' 'a poor fourth-form scholar,' laden with abominations.'14

About 1628, when the Congregation consisted of seven or

- ¹¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 3.
- ¹² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XIX, p. 75.
- ¹³ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 204.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 199.

eight priests residing in the Collège des Bons-Enfants, he knelt before them all and publicly confessed the gravest sins of his past life. Those who witnessed this scene, says Abelly, were edified at the sight of their Superior, 'so courageously renouncing man's natural inclination to hide his weaknesses,' and endeavouring 'by proclaiming his own, to destroy the good opinion they might have had of him.' Every year, on the anniversary of his baptism, he used to remind the community of his age and then kneel down and tell them how great a sinner he was, beg them to forgive the scandal he had given them and recommend himself to their prayers.¹⁵ Anything calculated to lower him in the eyes of others was proclaimed from the house-tops; he even exaggerated his misdeeds and attributed the short-comings of his subordinates to himself. He welcomed unjust accusations, insults and persecutions; he rejoiced in them before God and made no attempt at self-defence. This thirst for humiliations led him to cast a veil over his talents in order to hide them from the public. 'If I perform an action in public,' he used to say, 'and could improve on it, I will not do so ; but I shall omit anything that might give it an added lustre or earn some reputation for myself. If two ideas occur to me, when I have to speak on any topic-provided charity does not oblige me to act otherwise-I will bring forward the less good, in order to humble myself, and I will keep back the better that I may sacrifice it to God in the secret of my heart.'

Saint Vincent's humility was not confined to his own person; it extended to all the institutions he founded. He was accustomed to speak of them in the same way as he referred to himself, with the same modesty, never showing any pride in their success, nay rather, depreciating it. His Congregation of Missionaries is, if we are to believe him, a poor, a very poor little Company, the last and least of all. Whenever he sent one of his priests to attend a meeting, he always gave him instructions to take the lowest place.¹⁶ All his Missionaries did not experience similar sentiments; some felt a certain pride in the good their Congregation was effecting, and made no attempt to conceal it. Father William

¹⁵ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 206.

16 Ibid., pp. 199-200.

Delville even ventured to publish a brief account of the history, spirit and organisation of the Institute, without asking permission to do so. When the pamphlet was printed, he sent a copy to Saint-Lazare, thinking, no doubt, that his effort would be appreciated. It was quite the contrary. 'I am so deeply grieved,' wrote Saint Vincent to him, 17 ' that I cannot express it . . . it is most contrary to humility to publish what we are and what we do. . . . If there is anything good in us and our mode of life, it is of God, and it is for Him to manifest it, if He judges it expedient. . . . As for us, poor, ignorant, sinful men, we should conceal ourselves as persons unable to effect any good thing, and as unworthy of being thought of. That, sir, has been my motive up to the present, for refusing permission to have anything published that would lead to the Company's being known or esteemed, although I have been strongly urged to do so, especially in regard to certain accounts sent to us from Madagascar, Barbary and the Hebrides.'

After reading the preceding pages, the reader may perhaps ask himself, was Saint Vincent's humility real or apparent? Did he put on a mask of humility the better to win the esteem which he seemed to despise? There can be no doubt that the reply is in the negative. Hypocrites, who, through pride, cloak themselves in this virtue as a garment to deceive others, betray themselves in one way or another. Those who are brought into contact with them may be deceived for a time, but they will ultimately be disillusioned. This type of humble individual only humbles himself when it is to his interest, that is to say, when his act of humility is seen by others. Now Saint Vincent used to humble himself when there was no one present to see him, as Viscount Brenier de Montmorand remarks : 'The man who in each and every circumstance of his life sought for humiliations, who, when accused of theft, never even attempted to justify himself, who jealously concealed every action or event that tended to his glory, who was, moreover, truth and frankness personified, did not deceive himself and never meant to deceive us when he so proclaimed his own unworthiness.'18

¹⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, p. 176.

¹⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Conference at Montligeon, May 18, 1908, in 4°, p. 19.

298

No. Saint Vincent certainly did not seek for the esteem of men, but that does not mean he was indifferent to the value of his good name in every respect. He was especially careful to shield it from the slightest suspicion of the vice which is the opposite to that which spiritual writers are accustomed to call ' the beautiful virtue.' On this point, he was careful to the verge of timidity ; the precautions he took were meant not only to preserve himself from a fall, but also to prevent any evil interpretations being placed on his actions. He never made use of over-tender expressions in his letters and conversations; he never paid a visit to a lady, not even to a Daughter of Charity, unless accompanied and obliged to do so; he never would tolerate the least familiarity, he even thought it unbecoming in a lay-brother to feel the pulse of a sick woman. He was afraid of soiling his mind by even thinking of the vice of impurity and did not much care for the word ' chastity,' because it tended to evoke the contrary idea; he preferred to use the word 'purity' as being more vague and general.¹⁹ We have already dealt with all that he did to preserve the young girls of Lorraine and the devastated provinces from occasions of sin during the wars of the Fronde, and the important part he played in works concerned with uplifting fallen women, such as the Magdalen Asylum and the institutions established by Madame de Pollalion and Madame de Miramion. This constant preoccupation of keeping others in the straight path is enough to suggest an idea of the care he took not to wander from it himself.

He attacked the vice of impurity in its deepest roots such as idleness, intemperance, love of ease and comfort and the 'lust of the eyes.' 'He always,' wrote Abelly, 'treated his body with the greatest rigour even up to extreme old age, and when he was most infirm.' The saints have always been ingenious in methods of self-mortification ; Vincent de Paul knew and practised their expedients, such as hair-shirts, hair-cloths, metal bracelets and sharp-pointed girdles, uncomfortable positions, absence of precautions against heat or cold in the matter of clothing, and, indeed, in every other way, mortification at table, and voluntary abstention from

19 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XX, pp. 302-308.

every pleasing sensation arising from the senses of sight, touch, smell and hearing. When travelling, he never allowed his eyes to wander and look on the beauties of nature; in Paris, he never showed any interest in the displays of fireworks or other attractions presented to the public on the occasion of popular rejoicings. He was never seen to pluck a flower to inhale its perfume, and in hospitals, he usually went to those beds from which the most disagreeable odour proceeded. In the refectory, he showed no preference of any kind and always ate what was set before him. His tongue was completely under the empire of his will : it never gave utterance to lies, flatteries, mockeries, derision, to vain or impatient expressions or to those sallies of temper that spring from 'ill-regulated and ill-governed' passions.

Whenever he had to ask God to grant him a special grace, such as the salvation of a soul, he re-doubled his acts of mortification. 'There is nothing now to be done but to pray to God and to do penance,' was his usual remark on such occasions, 'Oh ! I must pay dearly for this.' He treated his body so severely that Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld once ordered him to moderate his austerities so as to preserve his life for the Church.²⁰

It was by renouncing riches, honours, fame, pleasure and comfort, that is to say, by breaking the bonds that attached him to this world, that Saint Vincent rendered possible his ascent to God. To God he gave all that he had; his mind, his heart, his thoughts, desires and deeds.

In the first place he gave his intellect, by blindly accepting the truths every Christian is bound to believe. He never even dreamed of discussing them, and his faith was preserved intact in Barbary when he was the slave of masters attached to the law of Mahomet; it came forth victorious from the terrible trial he endured after offering himself as a victim in place of a theologian who was tempted by doubts against the faith; it resisted the insidious arguments and the urgent solicitations of Saint-Cyran who exercised such a deplorable influence on so many of his contemporaries, and it was sufficiently strong to win over heretics and detach them from their errors.

²⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Ch. XIX, Sect. I, pp. 297-302.

This faith had nothing in it that was the fruit of mere personal research; it was quite enough for him that the Church had spoken; resting on its authority, which is that of God Himself, he used to say : 'I hold the truth ; why reason about it? The longer we look at the sun, the less do we see it.'

This truth, so precious to himself, was also valuable to others, and hence it was a duty of charity to announce the truth to those who were in ignorance of it, or to those who, if aware of it, lived as if they knew it not. This was his motive for sending evangelical labourers not only to lands peopled by heretics and infidels, but also to Catholic countries. 'A very learned and devout man,' he wrote to one of his confrères,²¹ 'said to me yesterday that Saint Thomas maintains that if a person is ignorant of the mystery of the Trinity and the mystery of the Incarnation and dies in that state, he dies in a state of damnation, and he also maintained that this is the basis of Christian doctrine. Now, that moved me so deeply, and indeed still moves me that I am afraid I may be damned for not having devoted myself unceasingly to the instruction of the poor.' This profound attachment to the faith places him in the front rank of the defenders of the traditional teaching of the Church in the fight which he waged against Jansenism, the unfortunate ravages of which no one than he more deeply deplored.

Before this faith of his was manifested externally, it had first permeated, as it were, his whole being. It was not shut up in his mind, as a purely speculative matter, but penetrated his whole life, which was a life of faith. No doubt, this life of faith was more ardently manifested in the course of the devotional exercises which united him more closely to God, such as his visits to the Blessed Sacrament, celebration of Holy Mass, recitation of the Divine Office, reading the Holy Bible and, in general, all his prayers.²²

Hope springs from faith ; he who firmly believes in the infinite goodness and power of God cannot but hope firmly and truly. Hope and confidence are indissolubly united. When Saint Vincent, after weighing the matter carefully,

²¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 121.
²² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. II, pp. 3-10.

embarked on an enterprise, he never allowed himself to be discouraged; he moved forward and was not astonished at the difficulties encountered on the way, and also without any fear of them, for Divine Providence always lends its assistance to those who profess to follow it. This principle sustained him in the most difficult moments, as, for instance, when he learned that his Missionaries had succumbed to the climate of Madagascar, or fallen victims to the plague at Genoa, or when the bursar at Saint-Lazare had no money in the chest, or the Ladies of Charity had begun to grow weary of perpetually opening their purses to support the Foundlings.

At Rome certain intrigues were started against his Congregation: the man who had informed him of the fact received the following reply: 'Let us establish ourselves in an entire dependence on God's holy guidance and let us trust that by acting in this way all that men can say or do against us will turn to good. . . . And even if the whole world itself rose up to crush us, nothing can happen save that which is pleasing to God in Whom we have put our trust.' When Saint-Lazare met with a severe material loss, he remarked : 'All things turn to good to those who are just, and we are assured that when adversities are received as coming from the hand of God, they are turned into joys and blessings.' When he was told that Saint-Lazare would be beggared by the extremely heavy expenses incurred by giving retreats, he said : 'Ah ! sir, the treasures of God's Providence are very great; we must cast our cares and our thoughts on Our Lord Who will never fail to supply us with food, as He Himself has promised.' When a Superior lamented that the illness of his confrères was a source of great embarrassment, he received the following encouraging words from Paris : 'Believe me, three men can do more then ten when Our Lord takes a hand in the work, and He always does so when He deprives us of human helps, and places us in the necessity of doing something that transcends our power.' When one of his Missionaries showed too great a solicitude for the progress of the Company, he received somewhat similar advice : 'I beseech you, sir, to have more confidence in God; let Him guide our little bark, and if it is useful to Him, He will save it from shipwreck.'

Just as he waited for Providence to give him a signal to begin a work, it was to Providence he confided its issue, whilst labouring zealously for its success. Whether it proved to be a success or a failure, his mind was equally at rest. God had His own designs in one case as in the other, and are not His designs of greater moment than ours?²³

Saint Vincent's confidence in God was founded just as much on his love as on his faith ; if he had loved God less, he would not have hoped so confidently. His love united him to God in a union that took captive his whole interior being, his mind just as fully as his heart.

It was not only when engaged in devotional exercises that his thoughts were occupied with God. If he were questioned on any matter of importance, he did not reply until he had first consulted the Eternal Wisdom. Whenever a piece of news, pleasant or unpleasant, was brought to his notice, again his thoughts first turned to God. When the clock struck, that is to say, every quarter of an hour when he was at home and every hour when he was in the city, he uncovered his head, made the sign of the Cross and called to mind the resolutions he had taken that morning at prayer. In his journeys to and from the city, whether on foot or in the carriage, he was ever modest and recollected so as not to lose the sense of God's presence. All who moved through the cloisters of Saint-Lazare could see printed in large letters that could not be ignored, the words : 'God sees us.'

All creatures reminded him of God. The sight of a country-side covered with cornfields, trees laden with fruit, flowers, birds and the stars recalled the goodness, beauty and grandeur of the Author of all these wonders. One day when paying a visit, he happened to be placed in a room so covered with mirrors that not even a fly could move without being seen on all sides, he immediately thought of ' the great mirror of the divinity which encloses and completes all things in its immensity and in which the blessed see all things and in particular the good works of faithful souls and consequently their acts of patience, humility, conformity with the will of God and other virtues.'²⁴

²³ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, pp. 10-23.
²⁴ Ibid., Ch. VI, pp. 49-52.

His intentions, as well as his thoughts, belonged to God. 'It would be much better,' as he said himself, 'to be bound hand and foot and thrown into a fiery furnace rather than perform an act to please men.' And again : 'We must not be satisfied with doing good works; they must be elevated and enriched by the merit of a most noble and holy intention, being performed solely to please and glorify God.'25

Everything about Saint Vincent manifested the intensity of his love of God; the warmth with which he spoke of the majesty and holiness of the Most High, his fervour at devotional exercises, his reverence for the mysteries of religion, his genuflections, his attitude in presence of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, the intensity of his grief whenever he heard of an act of sacrilege, his instant care to be a perfect imitator of Jesus Christ, and finally, the ardour with which he laboured to make Him loved.

He was eaten up with zeal for the house of God as his apostolic labours and foundations abundantly prove. He would gladly have died ' under a bush, whilst preaching the Gospel in a village.'26 When his work was over, he found it hard to return to Paris to take the rest he absolutely needed. He thought the gates of the city should fall down and crush him as a punishment for leaving so many souls in ignorance and sin.²⁷ The departure of his Missionaries to Madagascar, or even to the Cevennes, excited a feeling of holy jealousy in his heart; he would so gladly have accompanied them and devoted himself, as they were doing, to apostolic work in conditions that were hard on the natural man. One day he said to his confrères :28 ' I myself, old and feeble as I am, shall never cease from cherishing the desire . . . to go to the Indies to win souls to God, even though I were to die on the way.' Saint Vincent, in order to persevere in his love of God, the source that animated his zeal, felt the need of Divine Grace, and frequently turned to his heavenly protectors to invoke their help to obtain it.

After Jesus, he chiefly turned to Mary, whom he honoured

- ²⁵ Abelly, op. cit., Ch. IV, p. 31.
- ²⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 204.
 ²⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XXI, p. 92.
- ²⁸ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. X, p. 98.

in a thousand different ways by frequent prayers, such as the Rosary which he recited every day, the Angelus, the prayer Sancta Maria or the Sub tuum at the end of each devotional exercise, the solemnity with which her feasts were celebrated, when he always presided at the ceremonies and fasted on the vigils, the better to prepare for them, the pilgrimages which he made to her shrines, such as Our Lady of Paris, of Chartres, of Vertus and of Ardilliers, the advice which he gave in his rules both for Missionaries and Sisters, to cultivate a special devotion to the Mother of God, and lastly the choice he made of her as patroness of the Confraternities of Charity.

His devotion extended to his Angel Guardian whom he always saluted on entering or leaving his room; to Saint Joseph, to whom he turned to supply him with Missionaries and Daughters; to Saint Paul, whose name he was proud to bear; to Saint Vincent, Martyr, his patron, whose life he wished to make better known by further researches in the archives of his native country; to Saint Vincent Ferrier, author of a *Treatise on the Spiritual Life*, which he loved to read; to the saints of the diocese of Paris whose relics he received every year at Saint-Lazare, when the Chapter carried them there in procession on one of the Rogation Days.

He had also a great devotion to the souls in Purgatory; he said Mass frequently and had Masses said for their intentions, and especially for the intention of the most neglected souls. The practice still in use amongst his Missionaries of reciting the *De Profundis* in common, three times a day, is due to him.²⁹

He practised charity towards the living not merely by prayer, for he never allowed any unkind word to fall from his lips. He was not one of those who exaggerate their neighbours' faults and short-comings, but rather one of those who always excuse them. He had a real horror of detraction, and often made it a subject for the spiritual conferences that were held on Friday evenings. At one period, it was the only subject for conference for seven weeks in succession; he obliged nearly all his Missionaries

²⁹ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. IX, pp. 90-96.

to speak on the subject, and had all the motives and means that were brought forward taken down by a secretary.³⁰ The Parish Priest of Saint Jean-en-Grève, Peter Loisel, enquired of Saint Vincent how a former Missionary, Father Daisne, who had applied for the post of curate, had behaved when he was a member of the Congregation and why he had left it. The Saint, not wishing to injure Daisne or deceive Loisel, replied : 'I am not sufficiently acquainted with the ecclesiastic you mention to be able to supply you with the information you require, although he left our Company on two occasions.'³¹ Loisel was intelligent enough to take the hint.

At the Council of Conscience, when there was question of choosing between candidates nominated for a benefice, he made it a rule to bring forward the virtues and merits of his own candidate, without speaking of the faults or deficiencies of the others.

Saint Vincent had had a hard struggle to acquire the equanimity which was so admired by all. Of a bilious temperament, he was naturally inclined to melancholy and even anger. Madame de Gondi had noticed this, and observed that her chaplain from time to time seemed to be more gloomy than usual; she was deeply distressed at the sight, as she was afraid he was not happy in her house. 'I turned to God,' he related many years afterwards, 'and urgently begged Him to change my dry and forbidding nature and to give me a kind and gracious spirit, and by God's grace, my watchfulness in repressing the sallies of nature has set me free in part from my black moods.'³²

Gentleness in his eyes had not only the advantage of being a virtue, it was also of great practical utility. A theologian who, wishing to convert a heretic, attacks heretical doctrines in a temper, or a superior anxious to correct a subordinate, who reprimands him angrily, is going the wrong way about it. 'Bitterness never served any other purpose than to embitter.' Saint Vincent knew by experience how little rudeness is of service and how much courtesy enables one to reach the desired result. On three

⁸⁰ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XI, Sect. VI, p. 161.

³¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VII, p. 495.

³² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XII, p. 177.

306

occasions in his life he had failed to correct others graciously, and thrice his admonitions had failed to produce any good effect. When, on the other hand, he had exercised selfrestraint, God had blessed his words; self-restraint, as he understood it, meant to lessen a fault instead of exaggerating it; it meant to accompany a reprimand with so many indications of esteem, affection and humility that the guilty party should be edified and encouraged.³³

Saint Vincent had attained a rare degree of skill in this difficult art. A learned ecclesiastic, highly thought of as a preacher, but who was looked on as somewhat unorthodox in his views, paid the Saint a visit one day. 'Sir,' said Saint Vincent, 'you are a great preacher; would you mind giving me a piece of advice? We Missionaries come across unbelievers from time to time, when preaching in country places, and we do not know how to convince them of the truths of religion. Would you kindly tell me what you would do in our place?'---' Why do you ask me?' replied the astonished ecclesiastic. 'Well, sir,' said Saint Vincent 'simply because the poor turn to the rich for assistance. We are only poor, ignorant men.' Flattered by such confidence, the ecclesiastic proceeded to develop at great length the fundamental principles of the Catholic religion : the Scriptures, the Fathers, the unanimity of belief of Catholics in past ages, the testimony of the martyrs who shed their blood for the faith, and finally, miracles. Vincent de Paul listened with the greatest delight and interest, and when the preacher had finished, he said : 'That is splendid, but I have a bad memory; I shall forget it; would you be kind enough to put your explanations quite simply and plainly in writing and send them to me?' Two or three days later the priest returned with his paper. 'I am very much obliged to you,' said Saint Vincent, ' your manuscript will be doubly useful to me; for my own particular advantage and for your defence. Can you imagine? Some people have been casting doubts on your faith. Act in future so as to give no room for such an accusation. Edify the public by your conduct. A man in your position is more obliged to give good example than others. The biographer of

³³ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. XII, pp. 181-182.

Saint Charles Borromeo tells us that virtue is more resplendent in eminent men merely from their position or endowments, just as a precious stone seems to have more brilliance when set in a gold ring rather than a leaden one.' The priest understood, was pleased with the little lesson and promised amendment.

On one occasion a nobleman, in the presence of other persons of rank, yielding to an old habit cried out : 'May the devil fly away with me !' Saint Vincent approached the man, and embracing him, said in a most friendly fashion : 'And I, sir, will hold you tight for God.' The lesson was not lost. Again, a Bishop had frequently told the Saint that he loved his diocese so much that he would never leave it for another, and to add strength to his words, pointing to the ring on his finger, he said : 'Oblivioni detur dextera mea, si non meminero tui.' Shortly afterwards, there was some talk of this prelate in connection with a rich archbishopric and Saint Vincent, meeting him by chance in the street, after the usual greetings, said with a smile : 'My Lord, pray do not forget your ring.'—'Ah, Monsieur Vincent,' said the bishop, 'you have me there.'³⁴

Saint Vincent was most approachable and his affability was such that Abelly describes it as 'marvellous';³⁵ he spoke in the most friendly and gracious tone to all visitors but never stooped to flattery. In the course of conversations he used frequently to employ words or phrases of his visitors' native language or dialects, if he knew them, such as Gascon, Picard, Bressois, Basque, Italian and even German.

He disliked altercations and argumentativeness. He either adopted the views of those with whom he was conversing, or, after humbly expressing his own opinion, he remained silent. If he was free to choose between two courses of action, without any serious reason for preferring one to the other, he gladly submitted to the decision of his inferiors, even of those who were regarded as stupid.³⁶

Meekness is an attractive virtue, and hence he strongly recommended it to his Missionaries ; in fact, he had such a

³⁶ Ibid., Ch. XII, pp. 181-182; Ch. XIV, pp. 233-234.

308

³⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVI, Sect. I, pp. 254-256.

³⁵ Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. VI, p. 162.

high opinion of this virtue as to place it amongst 'the five faculties of the soul of the Company.' If one of his priests lost his temper. Saint Vincent never failed to remind him of the worth and efficacy of this virtue. 'If it has pleased God,' he wrote one day, ³⁷ ' to make use of the most wretched of men to bring about the conversion of some heretics, they themselves have admitted that this was due to the patience and friendliness he displayed towards them. Even the convicts amongst whom I lived are not to be won in any other way, and whenever I chanced to speak coldly to them, I spoiled everything; on the other hand, whenever I praised them for their resignation and pitied their sufferings . . . kissed their chains, sympathised with them in their sorrows and showed how grieved I was whenever they were punished. then they always listened to me, glorified God, and placed themselves in a state of salvation.' After he had mentioned his own example, he went on to say: 'I beseech you, sir, to help me to return thanks to God for that, and to beg Him to be pleased to grant all Missionaries the grace of accustoming themselves to treat their neighbours, both publicly and privately, in a meek, humble and charitable manner, and also sinners, aye, even the most hardened, and never to employ invectives, reproaches or harsh words against anybody whomsoever.'

However important the obligations of charity, he never allowed them to interfere with those of justice. Persons to whom he owed money never had to wait a day longer than the appointed time; on the day fixed, the debt was paid, and always in the creditor's home, for he would have regarded it as unmannerly to force them to go to Saint-Lazare to receive what was their due.

His carriage occasionally caused some damage; he never waited for a claim to be made but was always first to offer just compensation. On one occasion, two loaves of bread fell out of a baker's shop-front and were soiled; he bought them and took them back with him to Saint-Lazare. On another, a half-rotten wooden bar that kept a yard-gate in place was broken by his carriage colliding with it; he sent the owner a completely new one.

³⁷ Ibid., Ch. XII, p. 183.

VOL. III.—X

In the same way, he promptly repaired injustices of the moral order; if, owing to faulty information, he reprimanded an individual, he never hesitated to withdraw the charge, asking to be excused and humbling himself for his error. He was frequently urged to bring pressure to bear on judges who were well-known friends of his, to deliver sentence along certain lines, and he almost always refused lest the course of justice might be interfered with. If his own personal interests or those of any of his establishments were in question, he simply supplied his lawyers with all the necessary documents. As Lord of Saint-Lazare he had seignorial rights of 'high, middle and low' justice. When the post of Sheriff or that of any other subordinate office fell vacant, many candidates were recommended to his notice; he paid no attention to such recommendations, save in so far as the person suggested for the position had the essential qualifications for the office.³⁸

Obedience does not, like justice, imply a scheme of duties towards all men in general; it is immediately and solely concerned with the relations of a subject towards his superior. Saint Vincent, here as elsewhere, gives us an example of how this virtue should be practised.

No one served the King more loyally than he did. As a member of the Council of Conscience, in obedience to the Queen, he shouldered all the odium of measures that were bound to raise up enemies against him. During the Fronde, he endangered his life by allowing the Chancellor to use Saint-Lazare as a means of rejoining the Court at Pontoise. His attachment to the royal family entailed heavy sacrifices of his worldly possessions and almost cost him his life.³⁹

His conception of obedience extended to what seem to be mere trifles. For instance, a lay-brother found some pheasants' eggs within the grounds of Saint-Lazare; a hen hatched them out, and the brother had a clutch of fine young pheasants which he kept in a cage. Thinking to please his Superior, he brought them and showed them to Saint Vincent. 'Come along,' said the Saint, ' and let us see if these little birds are well able to fly.' They both left his

³⁸ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVII, pp. 260-263.

³⁹ Ibid., Ch. XI, p. 110; Ch. XIV, p. 232.

room, and passing through the courtyard, they went out to the farm, where the Saint opened the cage and the birds flew away. The pleasure he took in their evolutions did not prevent him from noticing the poor Brother's dismay. 'Well, you know,' he told him, 'we are bound to obey the King ; not only are we forbidden by the game laws to keep these birds but also their eggs ; we could not disobey the King in these temporal affairs without displeasing God.'⁴⁰

His faith taught him to look on the Sovereign Pontiff as the Vicar of Jesus Christ and the Head of the Church. He received all orders emanating from the Holy See 'gaily and without comment,' no matter what they might cost him. The election of a new Pope was always preceded by fervent prayers and followed by letters protesting his filial submission to the Holy See.

Bishops were frequently in need of his help. 'He embraced their interests and supported their authority,' as Abelly tells us,⁴¹ and this is borne out fully by what we have said on this matter in Chapter XXXIII. His Congregation was placed under the authority of the Bishops in all that concerned its external functions such as missions, seminaries, retreats and conferences for ecclesiastics. He had excellent reasons for not accepting the spiritual direction of nuns, and yet when the Archbishop of Paris placed those of the Visitation Order in Paris under his guidance, he submitted. The expressions of reverence and humility for the hierarchy with which his letters are filled, clearly indicate how much he regarded himself as their inferior.⁴²

In the hierarchy of the Church, parish priests come next to bishops; they too have authority, which, though limited, is indeed just as real. Saint Vincent recommended his priests ' not to move a straw ' without their consent. ' One of our maxims,' he wrote on one occasion,⁴³ ' is to labour to serve the public, subject to the good pleasure of the parish priests, and never to go against their views; at the beginning and end of a mission, we ask for their blessing in a spirit of obedience.'

⁴⁰ Ibid., Ch. XIV, p. 232.
⁴¹ Ibid., Ch. XI, p. 110.
⁴² Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. IV, pp. 138–148; Ch. XIV, p. 230.
⁴³ Ibid., Ch. XIV, p. 232.

Ecclesiastics of any rank might have recourse to his assistance with the fullest confidence; he assisted all who were in need, procured positions for those who had none, and raised up those who had unfortunately fallen by the wayside. He travelled five or six leagues to ask forgiveness from a number of ecclesiastics whose feelings had been hurt by some regrettable expressions used by one of his priests during a retreat. Again, a priest who was guilty of a fault from which he could not be absolved without recourse to the Holv See, was afforded hospitality at Saint-Lazare. Saint Vincent undertook to have the matter settled at Rome, and, after obtaining the indult, he procured for the priest a position by which he was enabled to earn a living. Another ecclesiastic was brought to him after he had given grave scandal; Saint Vincent gave him hospitality for several weeks, inspired him with regret for his fault, and secured his Bishop's forgiveness.

Priests who fell ill at the Bons-Enfants during their stay at that seminary, or at Saint-Lazare during a retreat, were kept there, if they so desired, until they had fully recovered. The house defrayed all their expenses, and if they proved troublesome, word was sent round that no notice should be taken of their oddities and caprices. Saint-Lazare also afforded hospitality to unknown priests who chanced to ask for it; such a one arrived sick and remained there as long as was necessary. Another, admitted for the night, left the next morning without seeing anyone, and carried off a cassock and cloak that did not belong to him. Saint Vincent replied to those who were anxious to pursue the thief : ' The poor man must have been very badly off to be reduced to stealing clothes ; rather than ask him to return them, we should give him an alms.' If he heard that a priest passing through Paris had gone to a tavern or other unsuitable lodging, he offered him the hospitality of Saint-Lazare and kept him there as long as was necessary. A priest of the diocese of Tours who was compelled to defend his reputation from attacks before the Parliament of Paris, and who was too poor to be able to remain for a long time in the city, had recourse to Saint Vincent, who advised him to send an

312

attorney to whom he offered free board and lodging. The confessor of a community of nuns in Paris, attacked by a malady which threatened to be of long duration and which indeed lasted three years, was in danger of being left penniless, for he had no means apart from his salary. Saint Vincent induced three devout ecclesiastics to perform the priest's duties out of pure devotion : thanks to their assistance, the sick man lost nothing. Not a day passed at Saint-Lazare without some priest or other calling for assistance. One, for instance, about to set out on a journey, asked for a pair of boots and twenty crowns, which he received. Another, a native of a famine-stricken district, used to travel from time to time to Paris looking for help. The procurator pointed out to him that there was no need to do so, as the alms could be sent to him, but Saint Vincent reminded his confrère of the Scripture text: Non alligabis os bovi trituranti. 44

He was equally charitable to the members of religious communities, and we have already spoken of all that the monastic Orders owed to him. As a member of the Council of Conscience, he had proved himself a powerful friend of the reformers, had combated abuses, appeased conflicts and removed obstacles to religious fervour. He could not understand the rivalries that sometimes exist between religious Orders. Brethren should love one another, he thought, and are not all those brethren who have left the world to practise the maxims of the Gospel?

Consulted one day by the Superior of the house at Agde as to how he should behave towards certain religious of the place who practised the duties of fraternal charity in a somewhat tepid fashion, he replied: 'You are bound, should occasions arise, to help them, and whenever you meet them, to manifest in their regard a true and sincere good will; pay them a visit from time to time; never take sides against them; do not interfere in their affairs unless to defend them in charity; speak kindly of them and say nothing, either in the pulpit or in private conversation, that could cause them the slightest pain; lastly, do all the good, both in words and deeds, that you can for them, though they may not treat you in the same way. That is how I should like us all to act, and we should regard it as a duty to honour

44 Abelly, Bk. III, Ch. XI, Sect. V, pp. 151-154.

and to serve them on all occasions.⁴⁵ Esteem, respect and affection, an affection excluding all envy and jealousy, revealing itself in word and deed, such was the Saint's own attitude towards the members of all religious Orders.

Anne of Austria once asked him to send some priests to give a mission at Fontainebleau; now, it chanced that a Capuchin Father was also preaching a course of sermons in the village church at the time. The Missionaries, in order not to draw away his congregation, preached at different hours, but for all that, the Capuchin Father was left without an audience and naturally complained. As soon as Saint Vincent heard this, he went to the Oueen, asked her to authorise him to recall his Missionaries and did not rest until his request was granted.⁴⁶ A house was offered to him in Anjou as a residence for some of his priests, but as the conditions laid down by the ecclesiastic who held the benefice were unacceptable, he advised the proposer to apply to the Sulpicians or Nicolaites. 'Both of them,' he said in his letter, 'are holy communities who are doing great good in the Church, and the fruits of their work are considerable. . . You would do well to put your proposal before them, for both of them are better fitted and more capable than we are to begin and to carry on this work to perfection.' He used the same language to a lady of rank who consulted him about the disposal of the revenues of a foundation made by her noble ancestors for the training of ecclesiastics. He recommended Saint-Sulpice : ' If you will be good enough,' he wrote to her, ' to make enquiries as to the good effected by Saint-Sulpice, you, too, may hope for similar results, when this community is established there, for it is animated by the same spirit and . . . aims at one thing alone . . . the glory of God.'47

The Society of Jesus was most highly esteemed and praised by Saint Vincent. He admired its spirit, discipline, rules and zeal, its saints, its works, its scholars and apostles. 'They are great missionaries,' he remarked one day, ⁴⁸ ' of

⁴⁷ Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. V, p. 150.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Ch. X, p. 103.

⁴⁵ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XI, Sect. V, p. 155.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Ch. XIV, p. 235.



FATHER CAUSSIN, S. J.

whom we are only the shadows.' And on another occasion : 'Let us resemble that peasant who carried the luggage of Saint Ignatius and his companions when they were tired out from travelling and who, seeing them kneel down whenever they arrived at a place where they intended to stay, did the same. When he saw them pray, he prayed too; when these holy men once asked him what he was doing, he replied : " I pray that God may do whatever you ask Him; I am like a poor animal that cannot pray; I pray to God to listen to you; I would like to say to Him what you say, but I cannot, and so I offer your prayers to Him."' Taking the peasant as an example, Saint Vincent added : 'We ought to look upon ourselves as porters to these great labourers, as poor fools who cannot say anything, as something that others cast aside, and as poor gleaners who tread in the footsteps of these great reapers.' Despite some passing friction with the Society, especially in Poland and Rome, his sentiments never varied, and he could not be drawn into the violent campaign to which the lax moral teaching of some Fathers had given rise. He had received too many services from the celebrated Company, had lived in too close touch with some of its members to intervene in a passionate campaign led by men who were aiming not so much at some bad theologians as at the religious body to which they belonged.

He was attached to the Society of Jesus not only by the general ties of charity, but also by those of gratitude, and these last were, in his case, particularly strong. He showed this by the way he behaved towards all his benefactors, but especially towards the Prior of Saint-Lazare.

If a benefactor met with financial losses, he was always ready to return his gifts : 'What a happiness,' he said one day, 'to impoverish ourselves to assist those who have done us a kindness.' He had more than one opportunity of experiencing this happiness. 'I beseech you,' he wrote to a former benefactor, 'to make use of the property of our Company as if it were your own ; we are ready to sell everything we have for you, even our very chalices ; by doing so we shall only be carrying out what is laid down by the holy canons, and that is to return to our founder in his hour of need what he gave us in his days of prosperity. I am telling you this, sir, not out of politeness, but before God, and as I feel it in the depths of my heart.' He did not, indeed, speak from mere politeness. One needy benefactor agreed to take back his gift; another refused, from delicacy, the two hundred *pistoles* he was offered, and a third would not hear of taking the three hundred *pistoles* Saint Vincent begged him to accept, for he happened to know that the Saint, who also was short of money, had borrowed the sum to give him. One day the Saint summoned his council and some of the older priests of Saint-Lazare to deliberate as to whether they should accept a legacy that had been left to the Congregation for the furtherance of its works. Someone remarked that the deceased donor had already made some very onerous foundations, and that the legacy would be swallowed up in the expenses it entailed. 'Granted that it is so,' said Saint Vincent, 'yet we owe a deep debt of gratitude to this person who has procured for us the means of serving God and of spreading His name. Let us pray for him as well as for all benefactors.'

A Missionary had fallen ill at Bar-le-Duc, and the Jesuit Fathers of that town had taken him in and nursed him. This act of charity deeply moved Saint Vincent, and during the next Friday conference, which was on the duty of gratitude, he praised the sons of Saint Ignatius, proposed them as models and asked prayers for them. In the year in which he took possession of Saint-Lazare, or the following year, there were some cases of plague in the house, and a poor woman nursed one or two of the patients; she had a royal recompense, for she received free food and lodging for twenty-five or thirty years. Vincent de Paul was grateful for the merest trifle, for a book that was brought to him, or a lamp that was lit, or a door that was opened. A grateful expression of thanks fell from his smiling lips for each little service that was rendered to him; he did it so charmingly that persons sought opportunities of doing him a little act of kindness so that they might be thanked by him. His gratitude extended to the workmen and labourers who, by the sweat of their brow, supplied him with the necessaries of life and even with some of its comforts.

But it was chiefly to God that Saint Vincent expressed

his gratitude, for God is the origin of all good, and we cannot even give an idea of how frequently during the day he thanked God for His innumerable benefits.⁴⁹

He particularly appreciated the blessing of having been born of poor, upright, God-fearing parents. He always loved his own family, but with a love that was careful not to transgress the bounds of moderation; on this point, he refused even what is permissible lest he should fall into any excess. We have seen how, on his return from a visit to Pouy in 1623, he reproached himself for having taken the journey as an act of resistance to Divine Grace. After he had founded his Congregation of Missionaries, he realised even more strongly how undue attachment to one's own family may prove an obstacle to personal sanctification. Those who went home on a visit often came back in a less zealous frame of mind, and with a decreased love of their vocation. ' Many of them,' he remarked, 50 ' . . . have become engrossed in the affairs of their families and in the joys and sorrows of their home circle . . . they are caught up in them like flies that have fallen into a spider's web from which they cannot extricate themselves.' He felt bound not to give his confrères a dangerous example in this respect, and the visit paid to Pouy in 1623 was the last time he visited his family. His father had died in 1598 and there is no further reference to his mother after 1610; though he had brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, he never made any attempt to enrich them or to assist them to reach a higher station in life.

One day the porter of the Collège des Bons-Enfants came to tell him that a nephew of his who had come to Paris from Dax wished to see him. When the uncle reflected that the nephew was probably a badly-dressed peasant, he experienced a momentary weakness and gave orders to have the youth taken secretly to his room. However, he recollected himself immediately and decided to repair without delay his first natural impulse ; he went down to the door, embraced his visitor, took him by the hand, led him into the courtyard, and summoning all his confrères, he told them that they had before them the finest member of his

> ⁴⁹ Abelly, *op. cit.*, Bk. III, Ch. XVII, pp. 263–271. ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Ch. XIX, p. 289.

family. Several persons called at the Bons-Enfants on that and the following day; the poor peasant was, at the request of his uncle who was now only anxious to humble himself, presented to all who called. The youth's embarrassment may be imagined; all that he was now anxious for was to get back to Pouy, with, as he fondly hoped, his pockets lined with gold. His uncle was, however, deaf to all his requests, but as he needed some money to return, he was given ten crowns, a present from the Marquise de Maignelay. The traveller had to set out on foot for Pouv with this trifling sum which was not sufficient to pay his coach-fare.⁵¹ Saint Vincent never forgot this passing emotion of pride, and at the following annual retreat, he confessed his fault in the presence of the whole community. Shortly afterwards, the first retreat for ordinands was held at Saint-Lazare. During a conference, he spoke of one of his relations who had been condemned to the galleys. This relative, a cousin of the fourth degree of kindred, was successful in an appeal from the sentence. Saint Vincent would have preferred that the contending parties should reach a settlement, but his opinion was set aside. The case was taken before the Parliament of Paris in the hope that the Saint would bring influence to bear on the judges, but he remained deaf to all entreaties. Some other relations were calumniated before the Parliament of Bordeaux; not only did he prevent his friends from obtaining their acquittal, but when, in the course of the trial, the villainy of the accusers was revealed, he made every effort to prevent the guilty parties from being punished.

A Missionary who had been preaching in Gascony and who had called at Pouy, said to Saint Vincent: 'The simplicity, piety and charity of your relations are most praiseworthy, but all they have to live on is the fruit of their labour.' He replied: 'Are they not very happy to be in such a state? Did not God say to man: "Thou shalt earn thy bread in the sweat of thy brow"?' On another occasion, when urged to do something for his relations, he said: 'Do you think I do not love them?

⁵¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIII, Sect. I, pp. 208–209; Ch. XIX, p. 292. I have all the affection for them that any man can have for his own. If I allowed myself to follow the natural course of my feelings, I would hasten to assist them, but I am bound to follow the movements of grace and not those of nature, and to think about the poor who are most abandoned and not about those who are bound to me by ties of friendship or blood.'

About 1650, his friend, M. du Fresne, presented him with a thousand france for his relations; Saint Vincent accepted the gift, but only on condition that the money should be devoted to missions preached in their village. This sum was still in his possession when Pouy was plundered in 1652 by wandering bands of soldiers. Some of the Saint's relations were murdered by the military, and others, despoiled of all their possessions, were forced to beg their bread. He was deeply distressed at this news, summoned his advisers and put the case before them. As may easily be imagined, they were in favour of devoting the money to Saint Vincent's relations; he sent the thousand francs to M. de Saint-Martin, Canon of Dax, with instructions as to how they were to be judiciously employed ; one of his relations was in debt, this debt was to be paid; another was in rags or his house was in ruins, he was to be provided with clothes or his dwelling was to be repaired; in case anyone needed a pair of oxen or agricultural implements to cultivate the ground, he should be provided with them. On many occasions, persons of position, including bishops, suggested to him that he should send one of his nephews for the priesthood and that they would defray the expenses of his education ; to all the Saint made the same reply : 'Do not turn any of these children from God's designs on them. Leave them in their father's condition ; there is none better in which to work out one's salvation.⁵² That, indeed, had not been his opinion in 1610 when he wrote to his mother : 'I should like my brother to have one of my nephews educated.' This nephew was Francis de Paul who became a priest and obtained a prebend at Cape Breton.53 Saint Vincent pushed his scruple in this regard to the extent of taking no

> ⁵² Ibid., Ch. XIX, pp. 291–294. ⁵³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 19.

steps to establish his Congregation in his native place. The Duchess of Ventadour offered to supply him with the means of doing so, but he showed so much indifference towards the project that she let it drop.⁵⁴

His detachment from his family is in full conformity with the teachings of the Gospel to follow Jesus Christ faithfully; that is to say, if one is to become His disciple, then one must, like the apostles, attach oneself to Him and to Him alone; whoever has a heart divided between two masters will be unfaithful, now to one, and now to the other.

Saint Vincent scrupulously observed another maxim of His Divine Master—the forgiveness of injuries. He always had enemies; when, as a member of the Council of Conscience, he allocated a benefice that was sought after by a dozen candidates, he disappointed many who at times freely gave vent to their anger. When, as Superior of Saint-Lazare, he had to defend the seignorial and other rights of the house against unjust claims, the beaten competitors revenged themselves by insults and calumnies.

There was, however, no bitterness or rancour in his heart. If he thought he observed coldness in the bearing of persons who had hitherto been cordial and friendly, he went up to them, and with his customary humility, simply and frankly asked if he had displeased them in any way, promising to be on his guard and to amend his conduct in any respect they might point out to him. Such coldness was, as a rule, due to misunderstanding which was at once dissipated by his straightforward action. On other occasions, harmony was restored by rendering, or even by asking for, a service. Father Faure, the reformer of the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève, had not looked favourably on Adrian le Bon's attempts to induce Saint Vincent to accept the Priory of Saint-Lazare. He complained of both of them. Saint Vincent went to ask Faure's forgiveness on bended knees, but was met with words of bitterness and contempt. Accordingly he decided that a change of tactics was essential. One day when they needed some Mass vestments at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, Saint Vincent said to one of his priests : 'Go and ask Father Faure for some for me.' The monk,

⁵⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIX, p. 294.

surprised at such a proceeding, said: "What! Does M. Vincent then not remember what I said to him? Is that the sort of resentment he feels? Ah, sir, there is something divine about that. I now see that he is guided by the spirit of God.' Not only did he lend the vestments, but he called at Saint-Lazare and in the course of an intimate conversation, the bonds of friendship were again renewed.

To be patient, to render good for evil, to preserve and to make manifest his trust in God, such was Saint Vincent's line of conduct in regard to all who persecuted either himself or his works, and his method was uniformly successful. Calumny did not spare him and he then used to say: 'Blessed are those whom God regards as worthy to suffer for justice' sake, if He gives them the grace to love shame and humiliation and to render good for evil.'

A person engaged in a lawsuit asked Saint Vincent to use his influence with the judge by saying a word in his favour; he always refused such requests on principle, and in this case simply replied : ' My word is of very little weight ; what good would it do you?' Shortly afterwards, he happened to meet the judge on some other business and took occasion to refer to the matter, whilst at the same time telling the magistrate to follow his own conscience. When at length the verdict was announced, and it was found that the other party had won, the petitioner arrived at Saint-Lazare, scarlet with rage and loudly and angrily abused the Saint for having done nothing to assist him. Saint Vincent knelt down and asked the man's forgiveness. The angry visitor was subsequently agreeably surprised to learn that the news was false, and that he had gained the lawsuit. He went back to Saint-Lazare to make his excuses and to return thanks.

Some soldiers who were found guilty of having stolen the cloaks of two clerics of Saint-Lazare, were arrested and imprisoned in the bailiwick gaol, where, by Saint Vincent's orders, they were well treated. Their period of imprisonment was terminated by a general confession and a promise not to steal in the future. Thefts were frequent within the precincts of Saint-Lazare and the farms depending on it. The robbers usually effected an entrance at night to steal wheat, fruit or vegetables and to cut down trees. Saint Vincent frequently opposed the imprisonment of the offenders, and even those who, through the seriousness of their crime, did not deserve such clemency, were not left long in prison. He made excuses for both classes of criminals, invited them to have their meals with the community, and indeed, often sent them away with an alms. 'They are poor people,' he used to say, ' and I feel sorry for them.'⁵⁵

The Saint, in his great kindness of heart, found an excuse for them in their poverty. No one will ever fully estimate his immeasurable sympathy for the poor, for whom he had the most tender and fatherly heart that can be imagined. If a poor person were spoken of in his presence, his emotion was shown in his countenance, and when, during the recitation of the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, the invocation *Jesu, pater pauperum*, was reached, his voice took on such a compassionate tone that his hearers were deeply moved. He loved the poor as a mother loves her child.

The feelings that animated his heart were reflected in his conversation. One day, speaking of the harvest which looked as if it would turn out badly, he said to one of his priests : 'I am worried about our Company, but not, as a matter of fact, as much as I am about the poor. We shall be able to manage by going off and begging our bread from some of our other houses, if they have any, or by acting as curates in parishes, but what will become of the poor? Where will they find bread? I confess that that is a weight on my mind and a source of grief. I have been told that in the country the poor people say that as long as they have berries and wild fruits they will be able to live, but after that, there is nothing left to be done but dig their graves and bury themselves alive. O my God, what an abyss of misery ! And how are we to remedy it ?' His whole life was one continual exercise of charity towards the poor; it was for them he founded hospitals, confraternities of Charity and even his Congregation of the Mission. His mind was constantly planning new methods of coming to their relief. 'He made himself,' writes Abelly, 'the purveyor in chief of all poor people, wherever they might be, even in

55 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Sect. VII, Ch. XI, pp. 169-174.

322

far-off countries, and devoted himself with the utmost energy to providing for all their needs and to supplying them with food, clothing, lodging and all the necessaries of life.

To inspire and foster a love for the poor in all those around him, he chiefly relied on two ideas; first, the poor are 'our lords and masters,' for they represent God, and second, whoever practises charity need have no fear at the hour of These considerations had, indeed, some effect on death. those who listened to his words, but they were far more influenced by the sight of his deeds. They knew that their gifts went to an upright, disinterested man, endowed with an intellect that could forecast the best means of attaining the objects he desired, and with a genius for organisation that assured the permanence of his undertakings; they were well aware that their money fructified in his hands for the benefit of the poor as it would not fructify elsewhere : in a word, they placed the most entire confidence in him. Even after his death, alms long continued to flow into Saint-Lazare, because, as people used to say : 'The children will not fail to follow the example and to walk in the footsteps of their father.'56

Even if we leave aside his great enterprises such as hospitals, hospices, the Foundlings, all that he did for the devastated provinces, convicts, slaves, and for the poor during the troubled times of the Fronde, Saint Vincent gave alms in abundance.

His thought went out first of all to the poor who lived within the manor of Saint-Lazare; he was far more concerned with his duties as a lord of the manor than with his rights. The Confraternity of Charity established in the parish of Saint-Lazare for the relief of the poor received an annual grant of two hundred livres. Saint-Lazare contributed generously and directly to their assistance; the poor called there for clothes, food, and even for shrouds to bury their dead. The house also afforded hospitality to the sick who had no one to nurse them. When Saint Vincent returned from the city, he often found beggars at the gate waiting for him. 'Just have a little patience,' he would say to the poor women, 'I am going to fetch you something.' On

⁵⁶ Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. II, pp. 120-123.

arriving at his room he might find some urgent business matters that could not be put off and he would forget his promise. When reminded of it, he would hurry down, ask pardon on his knees, and the delighted beggar-women would receive a more abundant alms on account of the delay.

The poor were not always satisfied : they sometimes clamoured for more, and Saint Vincent did not dare to hurt them by a refusal. He never insisted that those who farmed Saint-Lazare should pay their quarter's rent when, for one reason or another, they declared they were unable to do so: those who were able to give the best account of their woes even received an alms. A carter, for instance, who had lost his horses was given a hundred livres to console him. A tailor's apprentice who had worked at Saint-Lazare and returned home, wrote to Saint Vincent for a hundred needles and got them. A labouring-man who had been deprived by the courts of a farm he had tilled, died shortly afterwards leaving his family in utter destitution. Saint-Lazare undertook the maintenance of the man's wife and two little boys ; the latter remained at Saint-Lazare for ten years, were taught a trade and thus enabled to earn a living. An old soldier, covered with wounds and therefore nicknamed 'the Sieve' fell sick on the day of his arrival at Saint-Lazare, where he had obtained permission to remain for a few days. He was taken to a room, provided with a fire, a lay-brother was appointed to nurse him and he was kept for two months until he had fully recovered.

Saint Vincent's generosity was so great that at times there was no money left in the cash-box, and yet the poor were waiting outside for some relief. What was he to do? He thought of Saint Louise de Marillac; sent a brother to borrow some, and then gave it away. He never loved money for himself, but he certainly loved it for his poor.⁵⁷

By thus drawing on Community funds, on his own initiative and without asking the advice of his Council, did he not overstep his rights? There is, as his first biographer remarks, 'something a little surprising' in such conduct. Is there, to justify it, any need to suppose some extraordinary divine impulse, or simply to admit that, as the

⁵⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XI, Sect. III, pp. 131-137.

founder, he was entitled to act in this way during the early years of his Congregation? No-that is not necessary. The simple duty of alms-giving is sufficient to clear him from any charge of injustice. Those who have should give to those who have not, and Saint-Lazare had, even when its coffers were empty, at least enough to supply its inmates with food.⁵⁸

Love of the poor and humility are the two great characteristics of Saint Vincent de Paul's holiness; but they are only two, for there was no virtue that he did not practise in an heroic degree. He has surely deserved a place of honour in the Church's Book of Gold in which are inscribed the names of those who had laboured most to spread her empire, and to show forth her goodness; he was, at one and the same time, a great Saint and a great man of action.

58 Ibid., pp. 128-151.

CHAPTER LXI

THE MAN OF ACTION

N the eyes of Vincent de Paul's contemporaries he was the most prudent man of his age. Olier says that de Condren once said to him: 'M. Vincent is prudent, M. Amelote wise and I am child-like.'¹ The Saint was consulted by all; there was scarcely a meeting called to deal with devotional or charitable concerns to which he was not invited; persons of the highest rank, Papal Nuncios, bishops, noblemen and members of the legal profession came to submit their doubts to him, prepared to follow the solution that seemed best in his eyes.²

He was a man of action in the fullest and best sense of the phrase. He possessed all the qualities needed for the conception and execution of great designs; energy, initiative, courage, a genius for organisation, prudence, sound sense, disinterestedness, patience and determination.

If one wishes to form an idea of his energy, all one has to do is to cast a glance at the range, variety and extent of his enterprises. In the three domains in which he specialised: the relief of the poor, the reform of the clergy and the sanctification of the people, his work has a range, universality and amplitude that is really amazing. One asks oneself how one man could have effected all this in thirty years, and the answer is that he never wasted a moment's time. He was a marvel of industry; his days, and part of his nights, were devoted to correspondence, visits, meetings, drafting reports, preparing rules, and, for many years, missionary work. Moreover, his success was due to the fact that none of his labours were wasted; once he took up an enterprise, he pursued it without further delays, never

¹ Vie de M. Olier, by Faillon, 4^e ed., 3 vols. oct., Paris, 1873, Vol. I, p. 313.

² Abelly, op. cit., Vol. III, Ch. XVI, p. 247.

looking backwards or retracing his steps; he was not the type of man who destroys a scheme drawn up the evening before and then launches out on a perfectly new one the following morning. His practical, penetrating and critically acute mind weighed the arguments for and against any undertaking before beginning it; he examined every question to the roots, both as a whole and in its parts, with all its advantages and disadvantages, and all that could hinder or further its progress. He never made an attempt to bring matters rapidly to a conclusion ; he advanced methodically. and first made sure of his ground before taking a further step. Hence, when his mind was made up, nothing could make him retreat ; he would have regarded it as doubting God, if after praying and following Providence step by step, he had halted on the road through weariness or hesitation as to the direction in which he should go forward.

When one reads his life, it seems at first sight as if he were lacking in initiative; some external influence at work upon his mind is always to be found at the beginning of each of his enterprises, as, for instance, that of Madame de Gondi, in the case of the Congregation of the Mission, that of Madame de Goussault or rather of the Archbishop of Paris, in the case of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu and that of the Bishop of Beauvais in the case of the retreats for ordinands.

If we examine the question more closely, we shall find there is really nothing that should lead us to conclude that he had not the gift of initiative. Such interventions were essential ; Saint Vincent waited for them, not from timidity, but on principle, for he preferred to be called on rather than to put himself forward. No doubt, he might have taken the first step and suggested his own ideas to persons in authority with whom the final decision rested, but in his eyes, it seemed better, inasmuch as the matter concerned himself, to make no attempt to influence others, and to be simply quite ready to act as an instrument for carrying out their orders, when called upon to do so. When entrusted with a mission by those in whom he saw God's representatives on earth, he felt more confident that he was co-operating with Providence and not merely carrying out his own ideas. Furthermore, when others called upon him to act they did so because they realised, from his past, that he was the man who was most likely to succeed ; before Madame de Gondi provided him with funds, he had already given missions ; before the Archbishop of Paris asked him to establish the Confraternity of the Hôtel-Dieu, he had successfully founded other Charities ; and if the Bishop of Beauvais entrusted him with the retreat for his ordinands it was because the Saint and he had frequently conversed on the value of such spiritual exercises.

He certainly was timid, if we are to call a man timid who mistrusts self and is fearful of acting according to impulses that are only too human, but side by side with this timidity, the offspring of true humility, what amazing courage ! He was not merely a reformer, but an innovator, and even a creator.

What courage in creating the Daughters of Charity who were sent without the religious habit amongst the sick and even amongst soldiers ! This new form of the religious life. which has become the type of most communities of women since it was founded, was so much opposed to the ideas of his age that Saint Francis de Sales, after making an attempt for a while, had to yield to the force of public opinion. What courage in establishing the Priests of the Mission, who are not members of a religious Order and yet take the three vows of the religious life! What courage in his charitable enterprises : the Foundlings, the work for the devastated provinces, and also the scheme of a General Hospital which he inaugurated and which he at once offered to resign when the civil authorities requested him to give place to These were immense undertakings calling for others ! incalculable resources and innumerable and disinterested collaborators. He was just a simple priest, and yet it was he who sought ways and means to redeem thousands of slaves on the African coast, to cleanse the Mediterranean Sea of the gangs of pirates that infested it; and he even considered the idea of a maritime expedition to Barbary. the bombardment of Algiers, and what steps should be taken to procure both money and a leader for this naval expedition.

This amazingly courageous man had a genius for organi-

328

sation that was based on an extraordinary fund of good sense. He thought of everything, foresaw everything; his regulations are precise, detailed and practical. He thought of the most ingenious schemes for providing money for the Confraternities of Charity, or rather, for the poor, such as flocks and herds of sheep and cattle for country branches, and workshops for those in towns. He had collecting-boxes placed in churches and inns, and during the famine caused by the Fronde, he had pamphlets and leaflets distributed amongst the wealthy to enable them to see how the poor were suffering.

After three centuries, all his undertakings are still alive and vigorous, though often in modified forms. Such prolonged vitality is a proof of their solidity and of the excellent methods he adopted to secure it.

His method is that of a man who was both a saint and a scholar. He had wholeheartedly adopted this maxim of Saint Ignatius: 'I fully approve of the maxim of utilising all lawful and possible means for the glory of God, as if God was in no way bound to help us, provided we expect everything from His Divine Providence, as if we had no human means whatever at our disposal.'³

When we trust in God for the success of a work, we make an offering of it to Him before we begin it and beseech Him to bless it. Hence prayer is the first means of success. The second is to keep one's eyes firmly fixed on Jesus Christ. Saint Vincent never ceased from asking himself: 'How would Jesus Christ have acted in these circumstances? Which of His teachings is applicable to the matter in hand?' His conduct was modelled on that of his Divine Exemplar, and on the lessons of the Master of masters, but only after he had taken every possible precaution to avoid self-deception, that is to say, after he had assured himself by the light of natural reason that he was not the dupe of an illusion. Hence, in his case the method of the saints was completed by the method of the scientist.

The scientific method is based on observation, experiment and the interchange of knowledge, advice and information. The scholar or scientist consults books and specialists whose

³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 366.

stores of wisdom and learning may be useful to him in his own personal researches.

Saint Vincent, like the scientist, sought for information before proceeding to action; he held weekly meetings at which not only his advisers were present, but also at times priests of experience and even lay-brothers when questions arose that concerned their offices. The most important questions were submitted to the most distinguished theologians of the Sorbonne or of the College of Navarre, men such as Duval and Coqueret, and to the most eminent Jesuits of the Society. When he had made up his mind to act, he always began in a modest way, for he wished to have time to experiment before giving definite shape and form to his enterprises. It would be a great mistake to look upon the modest beginnings of his various undertakings as due to want of imagination; it was a perfectly deliberate procedure and was simply a question of tactics. Experience was, in his case, a source of knowledge, for he knew how to observe, and perhaps there never was a better pupil in the school of experience.

With the results of his observations in his hands, he saw the practical orientation his work should take; seminaries, for instance, are the result of an evolution that began with a retreat for ordinands; the Daughters of Charity sprang from Confraternities of Charity which had already been sixteen years in existence, and the Ladies of Charity had, at first, a very simple object set before them-to prepare the sick in the Hôtel-Dieu to die like Christians. Their field of action gradually extended to assisting the foundlings of Paris, to relieving provinces ruined by war and famine, and to helping to spread the faith in heretical and infidel countries. The Foundling Hospital itself began with the adoption of two or three babies, and during the next two years, the number scarcely exceeded a dozen; it was only after some time that it was decided that the Ladies should take charge of all the children in La Couche.

The same caution was shown in regard to rules and regulations which were, at first, of a provisional nature, for definitive rules only appeared late, often very late, when the lessons of experience had considerably reduced the element

of the unforeseen. The Priests of the Mission did not receive theirs until they had been in existence for thirty-three years, and the rules of the Daughters of Charity were finally drawn up by Father Alméras after the death of Saint Vincent.

The school of experience was always the most valuable in his eyes; he never ceased to keep his ears open and alert to the lessons that are so well taught there on the science of action, of action creative in permanent and fruitful undertakings, protected by their very constitution from corruption from within and attack from without. Other saints have created religious and charitable associations; other saints have been reformers, but perhaps none has reached Vincent de Paul's stature as a man of action.

To what is this superiority due? Probably to the fact that he loved the method of induction. What he calls 'Providence' is, in practice, indistinguishable from experience. To follow the indications of Providence step by step, simply means to wait on the lessons of experience. In the domain of action, he had, without a doubt, the scientific spirit, and to this is due the splendour and permanence of his labours.

The scientific spirit presupposes not only intellectual ability, but also a certain number of moral qualities. Men gifted with intuition to see what is needed and with a clear vision of the means by which these needs are remedied, are not necessarily men of action. The inventive or constructive faculty is not enough; it should be accompanied by the power of getting things done in which the principal part is played by the will. The latter faculty can scarcely be separated from the former, and a superior intellect will only reveal the full extent of its power if aided by a superior will. The scientist needs an independent, patient, determined will, ever intent upon the object of his research, and without it his labours will be in danger of proving sterile.

Qualities such as these are every whit as much needed for the man of action.

Independence, in the first place ; independence of selfish emotions, of self-interest and of self-love. Those who from weakness, ambition or other such motive, move aside from the path traced out by the intelligence, render their intellectual gifts practically useless, and debase themselves to the level of those in whom such gifts are utterly wanting; they resemble the man in the Gospel who hid his talent in a napkin instead of trading with it. The spirit will not prove fruitful unless the will advances in the light of the intellect, without allowing itself to be deflected by considerations of another order.

No men are more independent than the saints, for holiness detaches them from everything that could bring pressure to bear on the will to induce it to come to decisions contrary to right reason. Holiness is a barrier against the passions, a centre of resistance to the force of attraction of earthly goods and pleasures. Freed from all exaggerated mysticism, it is the finest guarantee of the independence with which the will should be endowed. Saint Vincent's holiness, therefore, was the source of that independence, that perfect selfpossession, from which the success of his undertakings could be foretold.

His will was also patient, so patient indeed that his slowness to take action seemed exaggerated; in this respect, his first biographer admits, he seemed to be 'a little peculiar.'⁴ This slowness to move sprang from a double root : he wished to allow himself plenty of time for mature reflection before undertaking any enterprise whatsoever, and in such delay he found a guarantee against the pressure of merely natural sentiments. When it was first suggested to him that he should establish a society of priests to give missions in country places, his mind was haunted by the thought and he was anxious to begin at once. This overanxiety of itself made him mistrustful; he was afraid of acting from merely natural or even diabolic impulses, so he made a retreat, and whilst at prayer, he felt his overeagerness vanish.⁵ When he was asked one day to recommend to the Duke of Retz a young lawyer of Montmirail named Martin Husson, who desired a post in that nobleman's household, he replied : 'I will think it over, but before doing so, I will examine the matter before God for a month, thereby to honour the silence which Our Lord so

⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XIX, p. 75.

⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 247.

often observed when He was on earth.'⁶ He did not take merely one month to reflect but four or five, after which he made the request, which was granted.

Both Nature and our Divine Saviour taught him the same lesson. 'Nature causes trees to take root deep down in the soil before they bear fruit, and even then they do so very slowly. Our Lord acted in like manner in His mission upon earth, for He led a hidden life for a very long time before manifesting Himself and devoting Himself to the work of our redemption.'⁷

Some of his confrères were of an active, energetic nature, which he never ceased trying to moderate : 'I desire,' he wrote to one of them,⁸ ' to acquire the habit of never deciding on or beginning any affair, whilst I have ardent hopes at the sight of the great good there is to be done.' This same correspondent needed to be reminded from time to time of this truth. On another occasion he wrote: 'Do not allow yourself to be carried away by the impetuous movements of your spirit. Divine things come into existence of themselves and true wisdom consists in following Providence step by step.'⁹ And again : 'God is greatly honoured by the time taken in considering all those matters that concern His service.'10 A weighty argument of which the full value can only be appreciated by the heart of a saint. Moreover, he had only to look back on his own past; deliberation had always been an element in his success, whilst nothing good had ever come from haste : 'I have never yet seen,' he wrote to one of his priests, 'anything spoiled by my slowness to take action, but everything has been done in its own good time, with the necessary foresight and precautions.'11 This fact led him to persevere in his habits of 'hastening slowly.'

Another essential of success is determination ; it is essential to hold fast and not be deterred by difficulties and opposition. When his resources failed, when his collaborators retired or were removed by death, his robust confidence

⁶ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVI, Sect. I, p. 251.

⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 218.

⁸ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 247. ⁹ Ibid., p. 473.

10 Ibid., p. 207.

was in no way diminished; he redoubled his efforts, turned to the wealthy for assistance, and always had the satisfaction of being able to restore what had seemed to be a hopeless situation.

The two undertakings that caused him the greatest anxiety were, perhaps, the Foundling Hospital and the Madagascar Mission; the former, on account of the rise in the cost of living during the Fronde and the resulting decrease in the supply of alms; the latter, on account of the dangers entailed by the long sea journey and the fatal climatic conditions.

Once, as we have seen, the vessel bound for Madagascar was wrecked in the Loire so that the Missionaries were unable to continue the journey. He announced the news to the community at Saint-Lazare and drew the following practical lesson : 'Great schemes and designs always meet with a variety of difficulties and opposition. . . . Flesh and blood will tell us that the mission should be abandoned, but let us be on our guard against giving ear to them. . . . God never alters anything on which He has resolved, no matter what opposition, as it seems to us, may ensue.'12 Shortly afterwards, word reached Paris that the three Missionaries who had formerly sailed to Madagascar were dead. Saint Vincent feared lest his disciples might be discouraged; he returned to the subject, reminded them that the Congregation had not gone to Madagascar on its own initiative, but only after it had been requested to do so by the Nuncio, or, what amounted to the same thing, when called by God; and then he went on to say: 'Very well, then, is it really possible that we should be so effeminate and cowardly as to abandon this vineyard of the Lord to which His Divine Majesty has called us?'13

'The call of God,' that, indeed, was the secret of his strength when confronted with difficulties, with anger and jealousy, with the kind of weariness that follows on prolonged application to the same employment, and with the illusion which desires a change on the pretext of doing something better.

¹² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 375.
¹³ Ibid., p. 422.

Perseverance should be accompanied by sustained attention to the work that has been taken in hand. The man who wills, in the true sense of the word 'wills,' never loses sight of the object in view; if he turns aside from it and seeks self, he is simply wasting his time and retarding the fulfilment of the work he has undertaken. The attainment of the object is what really counts, and everything subordinate to this is mere self-deception. Saint Vincent strove on all occasions to teach his disciples that particular lesson.

What, for instance, is the use of prayer? To lead up to good resolutions; to those who lost themselves in 'beautiful thoughts' and amused themselves with 'extraordinary ideas,' he used to say: 'You are meditating on matters calculated to satisfy your pride; you are wasting this holy time in seeking your own satisfaction, in self-complacency at the beautiful nature of your thoughts; you are offering sacrifice to a vain idol.'¹⁴ It was simply a waste of time as far as resolutions, and therefore, prayer itself, was concerned. The same sort of folly is shown in preachers who, instead of seeking to save souls, are content with their own 'beautiful conceptions';¹⁵ they, too, are oblivious of the object of preaching; they are simply marking time or even falling back.

The pursuit of any good may easily be transformed, if one is not on the alert, into self-seeking, and then the action or work in which one is engaged is spoiled by pride, just like a fruit that contains worms.

What we have just been saying about Saint Vincent's method and its results had been well summed up in an ingenious comparison made by the Abbé Boudignon:¹⁶ 'We may compare him,' he wrote, 'to that remarkable mechanical invention known as the screw. It works its way through without fret or noise; it does not split or spoil the material, but slowly, peacefully, progressively and steadily bores through wood, stone and even steel, for nothing can hinder its progress.'

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 86.
 ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 271.
 ¹⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Modèle des hommes d'action et d'œuvres,
 Paris, 1886, oct., p. 75.

CHAPTER LXII

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF SAINT VINCENT

SAINT VINCENT'S day was a very full one, and we now propose to follow his steps in that huge house at Saint-Lazare in which he resided for twenty-eight years; we shall also accompany him in his journeys to the city.

He followed the order of day laid down for his confrères : 'We rise in the morning at four,' he wrote to Saint Chantal,¹ 'and spend half an hour in dressing and in making our beds; we have an hour's mental prayer together in church, and then recite Prime, Terce, Sext and None in common. Afterwards, we celebrate Mass, each in his turn. At halfpast ten, we have a particular examen on the virtue we are striving to acquire, and we then go to the refectory for dinner, at which each has his allotted portion, and during which we have reading. We then go and adore the Blessed Sacrament, recite the Angelus Domini Nuntiavit Mariae, and afterwards we have an hour's recreation in common. When that is over, each one withdraws to his room until two o'clock, when Vespers and Compline are recited in common. We then have another particular examen, followed immediately by supper and an hour's recreation; after which we go to the church for a general examination of conscience, night prayers, and the points of the following morning's meditation are then read. After that, we go to our rooms and retire to rest at nine o'clock. . . . We have an annual retreat, hold Chapter on Friday mornings when each one accuses himself of his faults and receives a penance imposed by the Superior. . . . On the evening of the same day a conference is held on our rules and the practice of the Christian virtues.'

The hour for rising then was four o'clock, and Saint

¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 563.

DAY IN THE LIFE OF SAINT VINCENT 337

Vincent never failed to conform to this unless prevented by sickness.² He then took the discipline and struck so hard that his next door neighbour could hear the blows,³ though his poor body had no need to be beaten for it to suffer. His legs for a long period required attention and had to be bandaged every morning; he did this himself, never asking for any assistance. Whilst dressing and making his bed, his mind was occupied with devout thoughts; acts of adoration, invocation of angels and saints, thanksgiving for the night's rest. self-oblation and petitions for grace to spend the day well.⁴ His wardrobe might need to be renewed, but it was not easy to make him listen to reason on this point, for he was quite satisfied with his old patched cassocks and collars. and his hat discoloured by many years' wear.⁵ He always wore a rosary at his girdle as an external mark of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and as a declaration that he was her faithful servant.⁶

Less than half an hour was needed to complete his toilet, and hence he was one of the first to reach the church. The stall reserved for his use was just the same as any of the others, and once, when the Assistant, out of deference to the Saint's position as Superior General, had taken on himself to have it raised, Saint Vincent was displeased and gave orders to have it restored to the same level. 'That is all right for bishops,' he said, 'but not for me.'7 During morning prayer, that is from half-past four to half-past five, he remained kneeling the whole time, and made no attempt to obtain relief from this constrained position.⁸ Twice a week, this exercise was followed by another known as 'the repetition of prayer.' Three or four members of the Community gave an account in public of the thoughts with which God had inspired them⁹ during prayer, after which the Superior spoke for some time. When those present heard

- ² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. VIII, p. 70.
- ⁸ Ibid., Ch. XIX, Sect. I, p. 301.
- 4 Ibid., Ch. VIII, p. 71.
- ⁵ Ibid., Ch. XVIII, pp. 273-274.
- ⁶ Ibid., Ch. IX, p. 92.
- ⁷ Ibid., Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 213.
- ⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, Ch. XIX, Sect. I, p. 299.
- ⁹ Ibid., Ch. VII, p. 56.

him develop a subject before his Community, they used to say: 'That is how a meditation should be made.' He mingled words of advice and items of news in his discourse, and read extracts from letters which he had received the previous day or the day before, which would tend to the general edification. The ideas expressed by those who had already spoken also suggested to him some valuable remarks.

This morning intercourse with his community was a source of great delight to the Saint and confirmed him in his conviction that God reveals himself to the poor and humble. 'By God's grace,' he said one day to the Daughters of Charity, 10 ' the priests succeed at this exercise, and so too do the students, more or less, according as God gives to them; but as for our poor Brothers, Oh! the promise that God made to reveal Himself to the poor and the humble is verified in them, for we are astonished at the lights God gives them, and it would certainly seem that it is due to Him alone, for they have no theological knowledge. The brother may be a poor cobbler, a baker or a carter and yet they fill us with astonishment. We sometimes speak of it amongst ourselves and are ashamed not to be such as we see them to be.' Sometimes those who spoke were longwinded, tiresome, and wandered far away from the subject proposed, but he listened without interrupting. If he sometimes corrected an erroneous idea or an uncouth word or expression uttered by a lay-brother, he always did so with great gentleness, taking care not to sadden or discourage, adroitly excusing or even correcting the unfortunate phrase by means of a forced interpretation.¹¹ He was not quite so particular when dealing with priests and clerics who were less excusable on account of their education. For instance, a student one day allowed himself to say : 'I kept quiet to listen to God Who was speaking in my heart,' when the Saint stopped him and said : 'Brother, that expression is a little forced; say rather: "I kept myself in the presence of God listening to see if Our Lord would be pleased to inspire me with some good thought or impulse."¹² On another

- ¹¹ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XII, Sect. I, p. 188.
- ¹² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 183.

¹⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IX, p. 422.

occasion, a student began: 'I made an effort to place myself in the presence of God and asked myself if it was true that Our Lord was in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, and if it was a matter of any great moment.' Saint Vincent immediately stopped him and said: 'Brother, such a mode of speech is neither respectful nor becoming; one must not speak like that; to entertain such ideas is, in a way, to doubt about the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; it is a grave fault.'¹³

When a Missionary was called on to speak, there was nothing to do but obey, for prayer is within the reach of all. When a priest one day muttered some vague excuses, Saint Vincent reprimanded him severely : 'This is not the first time,' he said, ' that you have excused yourself from making a repetition of prayer; it has become a custom with you. It is very strange that you wish to exempt yourself from a practice which edifies all and from which all profit. Our dear lay-brothers themselves do so when I ask them; they simply repeat the thoughts God has given them, some more, some less, according to the lights they have received from on high. You, sir, excuse yourself every time you are asked.' The priest was standing but was told he should be on his knees, and the Saint then continued his severe and humiliating reprimand. On reading the account of this incident one would, at first sight, be inclined to tax Saint Vincent with harshness, but it must not be forgotten that this was a case of public bad example and of repeated acts of disobedience.14

Another exercise was also held on Fridays. Each Missionary knelt in turn before the Superior to confess publicly three external faults committed during the week. Saint Vincent intervened, when he thought proper, to utter a warning or to call attention, by a word or two, to the gravity of the faults committed. When a brother, for instance, accused himself of having spoken 'a little insolently' to Prior Adrian Lebon, Saint Vincent manifested surprise mingled with sorrow : 'What a fault, brother !' he said, 'what a fault ! No doubt it was preceded by many

> ¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 252. ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 70.

others of the same order towards persons of the house. The Prior is our father and it is he, brother, whom you have offended !¹⁵ Repetition of prayer and Chapter were held during the hour allotted to prayer, and the time was perhaps occasionally a little overrun. When prayer was over, priests and clerics in Holy Orders recited the Little Hours. Saint Vincent's whole external bearing was in harmony with the duty he then fulfilled; a modest, humble, respectful attitude, the head uncovered, slow, articulate pronunciation of the words and scrupulous fidelity in the observance of the slightest rubrics.¹⁶

Although mental prayer and the Divine Office constituted an excellent preparation for Mass, he was not yet satisfied; he felt he needed some further moments for prayer. He knelt in the sacristy and carefully examined his conscience to see if there was anything that might prevent him from ascending the altar of God.¹⁷ If he remembered any fault, he at once went to his Confessor; if he remembered he had done or said anything that had grieved anybody, he deferred saying Mass until he had asked forgiveness. One day he laid aside the vestments to pay a visit to a monk in one of the monasteries of Paris who had a grievance against him.¹⁸ On another occasion, he left the sacristy to see the laybrother who was cook; not finding him in the kitchen, he went down to the cellar and there threw himself at the brother's feet.¹⁹

He celebrated Mass every day (unless confined to his room by illness), with the exception of the first three days of the annual retreat, when he abstained from offering up the Holy Sacrifice for penitential motives. All who saw him at the altar thought they were looking at an angel. In certain cases, when, for instance, he recited the *Confiteor* or the prayer *In spiritu humilitatis et in animo contrito*; or the *Nobis* quoque peccatoribus, or the *Domine, non sum dignus*, he uttered the words in such a tone that the hearts of his hearers were moved. Whenever he came to the words in the Gospel,

¹⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 105.

- ¹⁶ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. VIII, pp. 69-70.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 71. ¹⁸ Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. VII, p. 171.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., Ch. XIII, Sect. I, p. 207.

Amen, Amen dico vobis, he lingered a little in order to devote closer attention to the words of Christ. As a result of his devotion to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he gladly availed himself of every opportunity of serving it, and told his clerics never to allow a layman to serve Mass, if they were present, because it was their special duty to do so. After Mass, he spent a quarter of an hour or more kneeling in thanksgiving.²⁰

In this way the three first hours of the day were specially consecrated to God.

As no arrangements had then been made for breakfast at Saint-Lazare, the Community fasted until half-past ten, but there were, of course, exceptions to this regulation. When Saint Vincent was an old man he needed some nourishment during the morning; one of the officials of the house suggested that he should take a little soup, but he answered : 'You are tempting me, sir; is it not the devil who is urging you to persuade me to nourish this wretched body, this miserable carcase? Is that just? May God forgive you.' However, he agreed to take as a medicine a soup made from very bitter chicory and a little hulled barley but without any dressing of butter or oil.'²¹

Let us now follow him to his room, a small unpanelled chamber, without mats or a fire-place, containing no other furniture than a bare, wooden table, two straw-bottomed chairs and a bed consisting of a rough straw mattress, a quilt and a bolster ; there were no curtains, and it was only three or four years before his death that he allowed a valance to be attached to the bed; there was one solitary picture on the wall. The Assistant of the house was bound to pay a visit of inspection to the rooms of his confrères at stated intervals, and Saint Vincent begged him not to make an exception in his case. He had also at his disposal for the reception of visitors a little apartment called Saint Joseph's room. In winter, the wind that blew through the cracks in the door rendered the temperature of the room freezing; some charitable hand hung an old piece of tapestry in front of it, but, though it was quite simple and worn out, it had

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Ch. VIII, pp. 72–73. ²¹ *Ibid.*, Bk. III, Ch. XIX, Sect. I, p. 300. VOL. III.—z to go.²² Women were not brought upstairs, but were taken to a special parlour near the front door. Saint Vincent had a large number of visitors, especially during the ten years when he was a member of the Council of Conscience; the mornings and afternoons were reserved for externs and the evenings for his confrères. He listened to all attentively and kindly, and displayed admirable patience with those who wearied him by their talkativeness and foolish remarks.

When a lady called to see him, he always took a companion with him; on one occasion, whilst conversing with a young and very beautiful lady, the brother wandered away but was recalled and told to remain where he was and to leave the door open.²³

A great part of his time was spent in attending meetings. There were ordinary and extraordinary meetings, weekly and monthly, at Saint-Lazare, at the house of the Daughters of Charity, at the Visitation convents and elsewhere; he had to attend meetings of the Council of Conscience or of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, and to preside as Superior of the Daughters of Providence. He might have been seen sitting in the midst of professors of theology seeking for means to stem the tide of Jansenism; bishops turned to him for help in their diocesan affairs, superiors in those of their communities, and even private families entrusted him with the care of their interests. His advice was listened to as that of a sage; it always threw light on a subject and helped to establish harmony during deliberations.

He also visited the sick and went to console the afflicted. If he chanced to meet poor or infirm old people on the road he took them into his carriage and brought them home; if he saw a poor sick person lying in the street, he offered to take him to the Hôtel-Dieu. One day he heard a child that had cut his hand crying; he stopped and asked what was wrong, took him to a chemist and helped to dress the wound; then he paid the apothecary's fee.²⁴

²² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVIII, p. 273; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 164.

²³ *Íbid.*, Bk. ÍII, Ch. XX, p. 306.

²⁴ Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. III, p. 136.

DAY IN THE LIFE OF SAINT VINCENT 343

As half-past ten, the dinner hour, drew nigh, he had to think of returning home, and after a well-spent morning, he used to say to himself as he went along : 'You have not earned the food you are about to eat.'25 The meal was preceded by the particular examen, at the end of which the De Profundis was recited for the souls in Purgatory.²⁶ The first act of the Community on entering the refectory was to offer the meal to God by reciting the Benedicite which he pronounced in a most impressive manner. Two poor men, selected as a rule from the poor in the Hospice of the Holy Name, sat one at each side of him during the meal. They had just heard a little spiritual instruction, after which Saint Vincent went to meet them, gave them a cordial welcome, helped them to mount the stairs, and during the meal he saw that they were the first to be helped and that they wanted for nothing.²⁷ Nobody could discover if he had a favourite dish ; if he saw pieces of bread left by others, he asked for them; he never complained if left unserved or if the food placed in front of him was badly prepared; he never left the refectory without offering up some act of mortification to God, and never drank undiluted wine, but rather water that was reddened.²⁸ These voluntary mortifications weakened his health so much that he had fainting fits during the night, and then his only remedy was a little drv bread. 29

The meal was not without a devotional exercise, for all listened in silence whilst some edifying work was being read, such as letters and accounts sent by the confrères of their missionary labours, ³⁰ or a spiritual book such as Rodriguez' Spiritual Perfection.³¹ The custom of reading the martyrology was introduced about 1654.32

After dinner, the Community returned thanks to God for the liberality with which He had provided for the wants of

- 25 Ibid., Ch. XVIII, p. 273.
- ²⁶ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. IX, p. 95.
- ²⁷ Ibid., Ch. XI, Sect. III, p. 132.
- ²⁸ Ibid., op. cit., Ch. XX, p. 305.
- ²⁹ Ibid., Ch. XIX, Sect. I, p. 300.
 ³⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 626; Vol. XII, p. 294.
- ³¹ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 12.
- ⁸² Brother Robineau's MS., p. 79.

His creatures, and then went to pay a brief visit to the Blessed Sacrament of the altar in the church.

Saint Vincent preserved a modest, humble, respectful bearing in church and in all holy places. He always remained on his knees, did not speak to anyone, not even to bishops who might ask him a question, for he preferred to accompany them outside the church rather than to give a reply. On days when his occupations allowed him a little leisure, he might be seen kneeling in church, especially when thorny and difficult problems were waiting for a solution. He frequently went and knelt before the high altar to open and read his letters there. One day a letter was handed to him as he was crossing the courtyard of the Palace of Justice; it contained, as he anticipated, an important piece of news; conquering his curiosity, he slowly mounted the staircase that leads to the upper story of the Sainte Chapelle in order to open it before the tabernacle. The door happened to be shut, so he knelt down in front of it and read his letter.

He was accustomed to visit the Blessed Sacrament before leaving the house and on his return ; when travelling, he did so every time he passed a church on the road. If the ringing of a bell gave warning that a priest was carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, he got out of his carriage and knelt on the road, whether it was muddy or not.³³ On account of his reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, he was most attentive to the rubrics whenever he officiated; he made careful preparation for all ecclesiastical ceremonies, and in his last years he was deeply grieved at being unable to complete his genuflections. He urged his confrères to cultivate a scrupulous fidelity to all liturgical prescriptions, and the sacristans to take the greatest care that all the sacred vessels, the altar-linen, ornaments and vestments should be kept scrupulously clean.³⁴ It was customary to ring the bell for the Angelus during the visit to the Blessed Sacrament after the morning meal; he preferred this prayer to all others, never omitted it even when in company,

⁸³ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. VIII, Sect. I, pp. 74-76.

³⁴ Ibid., Ch. VIII, p. 69.

DAY IN THE LIFE OF SAINT VINCENT 345

and always knelt to say it at the times prescribed by the rubrics.³⁵

An hour's recreation was set apart after the morning and evening meals. As long as Saint Vincent was able to walk. and as far as his occupation permitted, he never failed to be present at recreation with his confrères. Speaking on February 21, 1654, he said, referring to clerical students who had finished their theological studies :36 'They take part in the conversations of the older members, at which I am nearly always present; I have been greatly consoled at seeing how we have rid ourselves of faults that were formerly committed during recreation, and at spending two hours daily in devout conversation in which all speak in turn, seriously, usefully, and at the same time, gaily.' He himself took an active part in these serious, useful and gay conversations, and was always listened to with pleasure mingled with edification. 'He had the spirit of devotion to such a degree,' wrote an ecclesiastic, ³⁷ ' that no one could converse with him without being moved, or listen to him speaking of God, as he did, in language at once replete with reverence and love,' without 'feeling in oneself some spark of that sacred fire which the words of our risen Saviour produced in the hearts of the disciples at Emmaus.' Abelly, indeed, tells us that after meals, he 'devoted himself to the duties of his office,' but this should be understood of the last five vears of his life when he was no longer able to walk.³⁸ One could have listened in vain for a single flattering, contemptuous, mocking, impatient, vain, uncharitable or deceitful word in his conversations. His tongue was absolutely under the control of his will.³⁹

Recreation was followed by Vespers and Compline, after which Saint Vincent, as a rule, again went out on business. As soon as he had returned, he took his breviary and recited the Divine Office on his knees. Visitors and correspondence occupied his time until the hour for supper which was at six o'clock.

³⁵ Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. IX, p. 92.

- ³⁶ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 500.
- ³⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. IX, p. 96.
- ³⁸ Ibid., Ch. XXIV, Sect. II, p. 359.
- ³⁹ Ibid., Ch. XIX, pp. 294–295.

He wrote a great deal; he is said to have written 30,000 letters but that figure is probably too low, for it would mean an average of only four letters a day for a period of twenty years. However that may be, Collet says that in 1748 there were between six and seven thousand letters extant;⁴⁰ at the present day, we have scarcely 2,500, including copies. For a long time Saint Vincent was accustomed to write at least a few lines every week to the superiors of his chief houses : Marseilles, Rome, Turin, Genoa and Warsaw. Not a month, scarcely a fortnight, passed without a letter to the other houses.⁴¹ His confrères, and even the laybrothers, were not forgotten, and he never left a letter unanswered. He kept in close touch with Saint Louise de Marillac by means of letters and notes. The Sisters as a rule wrote to their Superioress, but Saint Vincent often intervened to encourage, guide, question and even to The innumerable works placed under his reprimand. direction entailed a heavy correspondence, and this is particularly true of the years 1641-51 during which he was a member of the Council of Conscience. If we remember the large number of benefices of which the King had the disposal, and of the applications to which each vacancy gave rise, we shall be able to form some idea of the labour thus entailed. He wrote not merely in his room and during the hours preceding the evening meal, but when any chance of doing so occurred; he even wrote letters in the streets;⁴² he frequently wrote far into the night, and the hand-writing of several letters clearly shows that he must have been falling asleep with fatigue⁴³ when still engaged with his correspondence.

He did not regard himself as sufficiently important to have a secretary, but when he found it impossible to deal with all his correspondence, he selected one, in the course of the year 1645; he chose a compatriot, Brother Bertrand Ducournau, who had been a schoolmaster, wrote a fine hand,

40 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. iv.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 236–421; Vol. IV, p. 376; Vol. III, p. 52; Vol. V, pp. 61, 187, 447; Vol. VII, pp. 22, 53, 365. ⁴² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 234; Letter No. 2089 was written

' from the city . . . at night.

43 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 464.

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AN AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF S. VINCENT

and was a man of high intelligence, sound judgement, rare piety and unbounded devotedness. He could not have made a better choice. In the following year, it became necessary to give Brother Ducournau an assistant, and Brother Louis Robineau was selected. Both were still at their posts in 1660. Most of Saint Vincent's letters were written by his secretaries after their appointment to the office, but he still corresponded directly with some, for instance, with Saint Louise de Marillac. Circular letters were written by temporary secretaries.

It would be difficult to determine precisely the amount of initiative left to the two Brothers; Saint Vincent does, indeed, sometimes remark that his letter was dictated,⁴⁴ but should that statement be interpreted literally? Moreover, we are in no way obliged to extend this statement to all his correspondence. There seems to be a difference in style between letters written by himself and those which simply bear his signature. The former are more concise, firm, vivid and striking; one also feels the tone of a Superior who is exercising authority and is conscious of his responsibility; it is the language of a man speaking directly and personally.

Everyone has his own method of writing a letter and Saint Vincent was no exception to the rule. In his early letters, the date comes after the signature, unless there is no room at the foot of the page, and it was only after 1639 that the date was placed at the top. When his correspondent resided in Paris, the date was frequently omitted, and only the day of the week supplied. Letters to his Missionaries and to the Sisters began, like those of Cardinal de Bérulle, with the words : 'The grace of Our Lord be with you for ever,' but this formula was not invariable, and was sometimes replaced by others recalling the liturgical season of the year, such as 'May the holy Passion of Our Saviour lead us to do and to suffer all things for His love,'⁴⁵ or, 'May the devotion of Our Lord's disciples assembled in prayer for the coming of the Holy Ghost be ever sensible in your heart.'⁴⁶

Saint Vincent's character is reflected in his letters; he pays but little attention to style; what he has chiefly in

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 616; Vol. VI, p. 391; Vol. VIII, p. 89.
⁴⁵ Ibid., Vol. VII, pp. 488, 490.
⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 385.

mind is the end to be attained. 'Do not seek in them,' wrote Mgr Bougaud,⁴⁷ 'for the smiling grace of Saint Francis de Sales or the oratorical note that may be discerned in the simplest letters of Bossuet, or the rather subtle delicacy of Fénelon's, but gravity, good sense, firmness, a profound knowledge of men and affairs, a clear, definite, practical spirit may be discerned in every page . . . together with, it should be admitted, a rather monotonous and involved style, due, perhaps, to want of imagination or, possibly, to the fact that he deliberately eliminated it. As for the corrections and involutions that hamper his phraseology, it must not be forgotten that almost as many will be found in Bossuet's earliest works, and far more in those of his contemporaries.'

He reprimands forcibly, consoles and encourages kindly, and replies to all questions definitely and authoritatively.

His friendliness and kindness are revealed at times, not unaccompanied with a spice of mischief; for instance,⁴⁸ he congratulates des Mortiers, a clerical student, residing in the house at Turin, on his rapid progress in learning to speak Italian, seeing that he is now able to say 'Si, Signor,' and he dryly remarks that the ship-wrecked Missionaries who had had to live on two or three days' provisions for two weeks, arrived 'in sound health and with a pretty good appetite.'⁴⁹

When he quotes the Sacred Scriptures, he does not reproduce the text with absolute fidelity. Here and there we come across errors due to inadvertence such as 'Madame' in place of 'Monsieur' or 'Mademoiselle';⁵⁰ words are sometimes repeated, omitted⁵¹ or left unfinished;⁵² several dates are inexact,⁵³ and two letters are left incomplete.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Histoire de Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1889, 2 vols. oct., Vol. II, p. 271.

⁴⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, p. 330.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 216.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 86, 217; Vol. II, p. 106.

⁵¹ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 553; Vol. V, p. 248; Vol. VII, p. 461; Vol. VIII, p. 59.

⁵² Ibid., Vol. II, p. 496; Vol. V, p. 152; Vol. VIII, p. 234.
⁵³ Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 199, 605; Vol. III, p. 272; Vol. IV, p. 340; Vol. VI, p. 520; Vol. VIII, p. 124.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 235; Vol. V, p. 153.

When Saint Vincent had written a letter, he read it over, corrected it, and, if necessary, signed it, frequently adding a postscript. No other qualification was added to his name save that of 'unworthy priest of the Mission.' The seal he employed represented Our Saviour preaching the Gospel to the poor and bore the inscription : Superior Generalis Congreg. Missionis to indicate that the letter was from himself, and in this way, to inform local Superiors that only the person to whom the letter was addressed was entitled to open it.

Letter followed letter, and when the time came to leave his room, Saint Vincent laid aside his pen to go to the church for the particular examen, and then to the refectory for the evening meal. Duty followed duty; meals, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, recreations for an hour, the general examination of conscience, night prayer and the reading of the points of the meditation for 'the following day. Afterwards, each one retired to his room and employed himself as he wished until nine o'clock, the hour for retiring to rest.

At eight o'clock on Friday evening, the weekly conference was held. Just as at the repetition of prayer, Saint Vincent began by asking questions, but he always spoke at great length himself. We should have a rare treasure if the fifty discourses a year, for the space of thirty years, on the practice of the Christian virtues, the duties of one's state, the explanation of rules, the lessons to be drawn from the festivals of the year, had been written out and so preserved for us. In the first place, it would have been a spiritual and also an historical treasure, for to instructions and advice he added anecdotes taken from his own past life and news of the blessings bestowed by God on the labours of his Missionaries, especially those in foreign lands. He never grew weary; the minutes flew by and he was astonished that the moment had come for him to stop, or even that he had gone beyond the allotted time. 'I have not very much more to say,' he would declare, and then add, ' pray bear with me for a little longer.' He hurried on, urged at the same time by his desire to stop and to continue; at last he would pause, not without regret, for he still had much to say. He made no attempt at eloquence or at expressing far-fetched thoughts and considerations; he was preoccupied with one sole idea

If he found himself held up in the development of his ideas by loss of memory or ignorance of some detail, he used to ask his confrères for information in the simplest and most natural manner. For instance, he was remarking one day : 'There were some ancient philosophers who despised riches in a very high degree, yes, although they were pagans; take, for example, one of them whose name I forget ; perhaps you may remember him. Father de la Fosse?' And the latter who was a good classical scholar, at once replied :55 'Diogenes.' 'Diogenes let it be,' said Saint Vincent, 'if indeed it was he.' On another occasion, when he was not quite sure of a Scriptural text the gist of which he remembered, though not the exact words, he said : 'Now how does it go? Who remembers it?' and on this occasion it was Father Portail who came to the rescue.⁵⁶ In the course of another conference, the obstacle proved to be the translation of a verse from one of the Psalms : Ut jumentum factus sum abud te. He could not remember whether the word jumentum was of masculine or feminine gender. He might easily have avoided the difficulty and may, perhaps, have thought at first of doing so, but as he thought such an expedient might contain an element of pride, he preferred to display his ignorance. 'I have comported myself in the sight of God and men like a mule, of whatever gender.'57

The humility, that was so clearly revealed in Saint Vincent's language, added to the charm and power of his discourses. No matter with what subject he was dealing, he never lost an opportunity of practising humility; according to himself, no one had ever more fully deserved the wrath of God because no one had ever so greatly abused His graces. In order to find material for acts of humility, he went back to the long-distant days when he had paid his last visit to his old home,⁵⁸ and even to the day when, as a little boy, he had tended his father's flocks and was ashamed to accom-

⁵⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 162.
⁵⁶ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 190.
⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 236.
⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 218.

pany him to Dax, because he was 'badly dressed and a little lame.'59 He was never tired of referring to himself as a poor swine-herd and 'a scholar of the fourth form,' or of speaking of the poverty and lowly condition of his kinsfolk. His illnesses, his infirmities and the care and attention they demanded also supplied him with matter for self-depreciation. 'Oh, my Saviour, '60 he remarked one day in a conference on poverty, 'how can I speak on this subject, a miserable man such as I am who have had a horse, a carriage, a room to myself, a fire, a nicely-curtained bed and a Brother to wait on me. I who am so well looked after that I am not in need of anything. Oh ! what scandal am I not giving to the Company by the manner in which I have abused the vow of poverty in all these and other similar ways! I ask pardon of God and of the Company for all that, and I beg them to bear with me in my old age. May God grant me the grace to amend, having arrived at this age, and to rid myself of all these things in so far as I am able.' The humble old man knelt whilst pronouncing these words, and according to custom, so did the Community. Word and example such as these present us, in truth, with a moving spectacle.

Humility and simplicity more than supplied the place of a flowery style and elevated considerations. From the holiness in which his thoughts and words had their source, flowed that communicative warmth which penetrated all hearts. There is nothing that serves an orator so well as profound convictions, and two words from such a man frequently produce far greater effects than long discourses. Saint Vincent on many occasions deeply moved all who heard him simply by his customary ejaculations of 'O my Jesus, my God ! my Saviour !' so expressive was his voice and the play of his features.

Perhaps no one in the Community of Saint-Lazare appreciated the Saint's conferences so fully as Brother Ducournau. He quickly perceived their inestimable value for future generations, but unfortunately, none of those around him seemed to take any great interest in the matter. He groaned in secret, but at length, on August 15, 1657, he could contain

⁵⁹ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 360. ⁶⁰ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 384.

himself no longer; he went to Father Alméras, the Assistant Superior of the house and presented him with a memorandum in which he had set down the reasons for not allowing such a treasure to be lost, refuted the objections against his proposal and suggested means for realising it.⁶¹ It was a difficult matter to settle, inasmuch as it was not easy to see how the Saint's words could be taken down without attracting his attention; moreover, even if there was room for a reporter to conceal himself behind a pillar, it was not easy to hide the noise of a scratching pen or the leaf of a manuscript being turned over. On the other hand, if the discourse was not taken down as it was being delivered, there were bound to be omissions and errors in any subsequent reports. On thinking the matter over, it was decided to entrust the task of remembering and transcribing the conferences to one or two persons well qualified for the task, and to allow them a certain amount of leisure for that purpose. Even then, they had to search amongst the members of the Community of Saint-Lazare for persons willing to make the attempt, endowed with good memories and at liberty to lay aside their usual occupations, for the conferences were held frequently. Brother Ducournau offered to undertake the task on condition that he was released from his duties as secretary to Saint Vincent. Father Alméras could not accept the proposal, which would certainly have been opposed by the Saint; he simply told the Brother to do the best he could.

The zealous secretary set to work, despite all difficulties; he filled page after page until he had written out sufficient matter to fill two or three large manuscript volumes, all of which are now lost except those containing the conference on charity held on May 30, 1659. As far as we can judge from what is extant, they were full of alterations and erasures, which seems very natural, for the reconstruction of a text demands repeated efforts to remember what has been said, and such attempts do not produce their results at the first effort. By great good luck, copies were made, and two ancient, if incomplete, manuscripts have come down to us from which two volumes of discourses have been collected,

⁶¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XII, p. 445.

DAY IN THE LIFE OF SAINT VINCENT 353

and which offer to devout souls, and above all to Missionaries, a sound, healthy and abundant supply of spiritual nourishment.

The Friday evening conference, followed by night prayer, was the last devotional exercise of the day. Often enough it was not concluded when the clock struck nine, and though this was the hour for retiring, Saint Vincent again sat down to his desk to answer letters needing an immediate reply, and worked on until ten or even eleven o'clock. Even when he was in bed, instead of quietly going to sleep, his mind, at certain times, was occupied with the need of doing penance, and he took the discipline twice a night for a week to appease the wrath of God that had been provoked by serious disorders that had arisen in one of the Missionaries' houses.⁶²

The Blessed Sacrament, as we have seen, played a great part in his daily life, and the same is true of devotion to the Holy Spirit and to the Blessed Virgin, for each exercise was begun with the invocation *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and ended with an anthem and prayer in honour of the Queen of Heaven; moreover, he never omitted to recite the Rosary daily.⁶³

Saint Vincent de Paul, like all the saints, divided his time between earth and Heaven; he lived in this world, but his spirit sought light and strength from on high. His natural faculties drew on the supernatural for the grace which elevates, the light which guides and the strength that brings to fruition.

⁶² Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XIX, Sect. I, p. 301. ⁶³ Ibid., Ch. IX, p. 92.

CHAPTER LXIII

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL'S SPIRITUAL TEACHING

T. VINCENT DE PAUL had several masters in the school of the spiritual life of whom the first was Father D de Bérulle. Almost immediately on his arrival in Paris, after his adventures in Barbary and his year's sojourn at Rome, he placed himself under the guidance of this eminent ecclesiastic to whom all the priests of the capital who aspired to a higher degree of perfection, instinctively turned. In accordance with the suggestion of this wise guide he went from Paris to Clichy, from Clichy to the mansion of Count Emmanuel de Gondi, general of the galleys, from there to Châtillon-les-Dombes, whence, after a sojourn of six months, he once more set out for Paris to offer his services yet again to the general of the galleys. The docility with which for twelve years he followed the roads along which the founder of the Oratory led him, shows how completely he placed his confidence in Father de Bérulle, and from the extent of this confidence we might deduce, a priori, how deep was the mark made on his mind and heart by the teachings of the Cardinal, if we had not clear proof of the fact from a comparison of the writings of the two men.

The Saint was not only a contemporary of de Bérulle's, he was also a contemporary of Saint Francis de Sales with whom he lived in close intimacy for many months. The memory of those delightful talks with the Bishop of Geneva charmed his mind and constituted a sort of faint echo of the happiness he had experienced in these private and intimate conversations. The Introduction to a devout life and the Treatise on the love of God were his favourite books to the day of his death. In them he found the life-giving doctrine which his holy friend had expounded to him by word of mouth. And it was not merely to satisfy his own pleasure unless it be followed by love and a firm resolve. There are three stages that must be passed through before we come to action, and knowledge is only the first. 'What is the use of settling our minds to the consideration of a heap of motives and passages if it be not, perhaps, to enlighten our understanding and render it subtle? And this is to devote oneself to study rather than to prayer.'

Two or three motives as a rule are sufficient—' any more only confuse.' Suppose we are meditating on the love of God, is there any need to reflect at great length in order to grasp the idea that the Supreme Being should be loved? Let us reflect on the benefits He has conferred and daily confers on us; let us remember that He has commanded us to love Him, and the will is at once set on fire. At this point Saint Vincent de Paul explains his meaning by a charming comparison taken from the method of procuring a light which was common in his day. 'When we want a light,' he says,⁵ ' we make use of a flint and steel ; we strike the flint and when the spark has been produced and the tinder kindled, we light the candle; and the man who would keep on hammering away, after having lit the candle, would make himself ridiculous. In like manner, when the soul has been sufficiently enlightened by considerations, is there any need to search for others, and to keep on hammering away at our minds in order to multiply motives and thoughts? Do you not see that that is only wasting time and that we must now go on to inflame the will and rouse the affections by the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice? And that is not very difficult, because the will follows the light of the understanding, and is inclined to whatever is set before it as good and desirable.'

The heart is inflamed; so much the better; a step has been taken that brings us nearer the goal but still it is only a stage. What would be the use of this warmth of feeling if we were not to make resolutions? To love a virtue would be a platonic sort of love if we were not resolved on accomplishing its acts. 'Now that is the important point, and the fruit to be gathered from prayer. Let us now foresee what hindrances may arise, and what are the means of helping

⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 406.

VOL. III.-2 A

ourselves; let us make a firm resolution of avoiding the first, and embracing the last.'

This is the end to which prayer should be directed. Those who seek 'lofty thoughts,' those who seek after 'ecstasies and raptures' are losing their time. That which counts in the sight of God is to render ourselves more perfect in the practice of virtue. What can be a more excellent result of prayer in the case of a Sister of Charity than the following: 'I will set out to serve the poor; I will try to do so in a gay and modest manner, so as to console and edify them; I will speak to them as if they were my lords and masters. There are some persons who seldom speak to me : I will bear it. I am accustomed to grieve a Sister in certain circumstances. I will avoid doing so. She annoys me at times by acting in such and such a manner. I will bear with her. One lady scolds me; another finds fault with me ; I will try not to omit the fulfilment of my duty, and will pay her the respect and honour due to her. When I am with such a one I nearly always receive some hurt to my perfection; I will, as far as possible, avoid them.'6

When the resolution has been taken and offered to God, the prayer is at an end. And now, when the day's work begins, our vigilance must be redoubled in order that we may hold fast to our resolutions, and discover and surmount the obstacles that may hinder us from being faithful to them. The chief means of so doing, according to Saint Vincent de Paul, may be reduced to two : humility, which is opposed to pride, and mortification which destroys inordinate attachments.

Saint Vincent de Paul excelled in the virtue of humility. When he humbled himself he did not do so in a mere manner of speaking; his words were the utterance of his deepest convictions. No one has practised humility better than he, and no one has spoken of it with more force and unction. He even went so far as to say to his Missionaries : 'Do you really understand that we are worse than demons —yes—worse than demons; because if God had given them a tenth part of the graces He has given us, great

⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IX, p. 30.

that he read and re-read these writings ; it was also that he might be able to supply an appropriate spiritual food for the Visitation nuns at Paris and Saint-Denis whose Superior he remained for many years. As they listened to St. Vincent de Paul, they often thought they were listening to the voice of their own Blessed Father, and the frequent remarks of the holy bishop's which are scattered through the conferences to his Missionaries and to the Sisters of Charity, allow us to conjecture that when he spoke to the Visitation nuns, his quotations from Saint Francis de Sales must have been even more abundant.

Saint Vincent often turned over with a holy joy the pages of the Imitation of Christ¹, as also the works of Father Luis of Granada which he recommended to those who were making a retreat;² he had Rodriguez' Christian Perfection read in public in the refectory of Saint-Lazare;³ the Christian Year⁴ by Father Suffren was read, by his advice, at the meals of the Sisters of Charity; the meditations of Father Saint-Jure were adapted for the use of the Community of the Mother-House, and he sent copies of the meditations of Father Busée to all the houses of his Congregation, as well as placing them in the hands of those preparing for ordination, after having requested his assistant, Father René Alméras, to publish a new, complete, and revised edition of the work.

Such were the spiritual writers dear to Saint Vincent de Paul. It is very likely that he was influenced in different degrees by all of them, but fundamentally he most resembles de Bérulle and Saint Francis de Sales. He had not merely read their works; he had known the men; to the charm of their writings had been added the magic power of the living voice heightened by the prestige of their sanctity.

Saint Vincent de Paul was a faithful but not a slavish disciple. It may be said that his spiritual teaching descends in a straight line from that of Bérulle and the Holy Bishop of Geneva, but it would be a mistake to add that they are

² Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 198, 382; Vol. III, p. 282; Vol. IV, p. 201.

⁸ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 12. ⁴ Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 632.

¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 382; Vol. V, p. 297; Vol. VI, p. 129.

identical. Just as the stomach transforms by digestion the food it has absorbed, so did his mind transform their teachings. He has made it his own by imprinting on it the special mark of his own spirit which ever tended towards action. This bent explains why Saint Vincent's is a practical spirituality.

He was not the man to expatiate at great length on the 'states' of the Word Incarnate or on the annihilation of self in its relation to the annihilation of Christ, or on the marvels of the inner life of Mary. Theoretical considerations did not attract him, or rather they did not hold him. Observe the subjects he deals with in his conferences to his Missionaries, and to the Sisters of Charity; he seems to be interested in nothing but their respective duties. He loves to speak of the Christian virtues, of the observance of rule, and the way to observe the festivals of the Church. If he takes the Eucharist as a theme for his discourse it is in order that he may tell them, above all, how to honour the august Sacrament; if his choice falls on a mystery, such as the Blessed Trinity, it is that he may point out the practical lessons to be drawn from it, or to recall the obligations it entails.

In order that we may the better grasp this practical side of Saint Vincent de Paul's spirituality, let us follow him in the advice he gives to the Priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity with the object of keeping them in the path of virtue.

Prayer is to be the beginning and the preparation for the day; hence its capital importance, and he therefore insists at length on the method to be employed in making it, if prayer is to be profitable. According to his analysis it will be found that the three faculties of the soul are brought into play: the mind, from which considerations proceed; the heart, which is the source of the affections, and the will which takes resolutions.

Considerations are essential; we need and must know the good if we are to love it, and the bad if we are to detest it, so that we may thus seek what we are to love and avoid what we should detest. Considerations are the point of departure and not the goal; they are a means and not an end. We must push forward. Knowledge of itself is barren Heavens! what use would they not have made of them !' And he applied the words in the first place to himself: 'As for me, I have no difficulty in seeing that, because I see as clear as daylight that I am worse than the devil; for if the devil had received the graces God has given me (I do not mean extraordinary graces—I mean just ordinary graces), there would be no devil in hell who would not be better than I am.''

What saint has ever humbled himself so profoundly? His humility was as remarkable for its extent as for its depth. Man is not an isolated being; his self is prolonged outside his own personality; he has a native land, a family, he speaks and acts, and he can be proud of each and all of these; he may also use them as means of humbling himself, because wherever pride shows itself, humility can, or rather should, force an entrance.

Saint Vincent de Paul often warned his Missionaries against collective pride; he asked them to add to personal humility, humility in regard to their Congregation. He tells his followers, for instance : 'It is not enough for us to see, or feel, in ourselves reasons for being despised, or that we should love our own abjection; we should also love the more general contempt that may be extended to the Company.'8 Hence, let us regard ourselves as happy if it be said that the Congregation of the Mission 'is of no use to the Church, that it is made up of poor persons, that whatsoever it does it does badly, that its work in the country bears no fruit, that its seminaries are without grace and its ordinations carelessly and distastefully carried out. If we have the spirit of God we shall be prepared to admit that the Company should have the sort of reputation we have just indicated, that it be placed below all other Companies, and we shall be far from desiring that great things be said of it, or that men should be aware that it carries out this work or that it be esteemed by the great and highly regarded by the bishops. Oh, God preserve us from such foolishness ! It is only the spirit of the world and the malice of pride that can suggest such ideas. On the contrary, we should desire and rejoice at its being despised, and no matter what

⁷ Ibid., Vol. X, p. 439. ⁸ Ibid., Vol. X, p. 200.

nature and worldly prudence may say, we should accept such contempt as long as God may be pleased for it to endure, no matter how profound such contempt may be.'⁹ Such teaching may seem strange to some. This is how Saint Vincent de Paul justifies it : 'Do you not see that one who is willing to be despised in his own person, but cannot tolerate that the Company as a body should be despised in any way, and who wishes it to be highly praised and esteemed, do you not see, I repeat, that such a one finds himself again in the Company and takes back what he has given?'¹⁰

'Besides, Our Lord practised humility. He was not only humble as far as He Himself was concerned, but He was humble in regard to His own little Company which He formed out of a few poor, rustic men, without science or good manners, who even did not agree amongst themselves, all of whom ultimately abandoned Him and who, after His death, were treated like Himself, cast out, despised, accused, condemned and executed.'¹¹

Mortification is the sister of humility. Whoever does not know how to mortify himself has never learned how to be humble. All our faculties supply material for the practice of mortification because they all need to be regulated in their activities ; the senses, the tongue, the intellect, the judgement, the memory, the heart and the will. Passion is lying in wait for each and all of these in order to drag them beyond the bounds of right order ; and it is our duty to master our passions.

Saint Vincent de Paul does not in his conferences insist on extraordinary mortifications such as disciplines, hairshirts and instruments of penance, and he does not do so for two reasons : because his conferences were addressed to a large number of persons, and such penitential practices do not suit everybody ; secondly, because the rule of life in a Community of itself imposes daily mortifications that are fully as good, at any rate by their continuity, as such extraordinary mortifications.

He is rather inclined to seek the perfection of mortification

⁹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XII, p. 203.

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 323. ¹¹ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 205.

in the perfect renouncement implied by the practice of obedience. No doubt we obey when we submit our will to that of our superiors; but the perfect go still farther: they also submit their judgements, and of all renouncements this is perhaps the most difficult.

'We should submit our judgement to whatever is commanded . . . when you obey, you will always be doing the will of God. . . . Superiors may make mistakes, but not so you. . . We shall therefore never consider whether those who give orders are right in doing so.' To act otherwise is to obey 'as evil spirits obey . . . as they do in hell where they are subject to God by force.'¹²

Submission of one's judgement therefore excludes both external murmurings and internal criticisms.

Saint Vincent de Paul was not satisfied with even that : he advises us to submit to those who have no authority over us. 'A topic for discussion is suggested and everyone states his views : now, in order to practise renunciation on such an occasion, we should not refuse to express our opinions but should state our arguments, and a man whose judgement is submissive will prefer rather to follow the opinions of others than his own.'¹³ Such an act of condescension is manifestly intended only in the case where one's opponent has the reputation of being an enlightened person whose views deserve serious consideration, because otherwise it would be only weakness and rashness to submit.

There is no attachment, no matter how deserving of respect its object may be, that may not in certain circumstances constitute a danger to one's soul, and hence, in such a case, it may be necessary to treat it as an enemy. When God calls on us we must make a sacrifice of all things, our health, our relations, our friends and fatherland.

Our health in the first place. Amongst the passions which we are bound to fight against by the practice of mortifications, Saint Vincent de Paul places 'a passion for one's health' which is common enough, and which is, as a rule, by no means profitable for one's bodily welfare, easily develops into a mania, giving rise to selfishness, and slows down or even extinguishes activity in good works. 'This solicitude

¹² Ibid., Vol. X, p. 390. ¹³ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 214.

for life, this fear of suffering and this weakness of certain individuals, who devote their whole mind—of itself capable of energetic action—to the care of their miserable existence, are great hindrances to the service of God.' Such persons 'are not at liberty to follow Jesus Christ. We are His disciples and He finds us chained like slaves. To what? To a little scrap of health, to an imaginary remedy, to an infirmary wherein nothing is wanting, to a house that pleases us, to a journey that entertains us, to a repose that is redolent of laziness.'

It may be objected : 'The doctor told me not to work so hard, to take air and exercise, to change my place of residence. O misery ! do the great ones of the world as a rule change their dwelling-places because they are sometimes indisposed ? or a bishop his diocese ; or a governor his post ; or a citizen his native place, or a merchant his occupation ?'

Here is another objection : Health ' is a gift of God and so it should be preserved '--- ' That,' says Saint Vincent de Paul, ' is the language of egotism and not of Our Saviour. Our Lord said : *He that will save his life will lose it*. And He adds, moreover, that a man cannot perform a greater act of love than to give his life for his friend. Is not God our friend ? And is not our neighbour ? Should we be worthy of enjoying the existence God has given us if we were to refuse to employ it on such noble objects ? Surely, knowing that we hold our lives from His liberal hand, we should be committing an act of injustice if we did not dispose of it according to His designs.'¹⁴

The love of one's own family, like the care of one's health, is laudable in itself, provided it be kept within due bounds, but as Nature tends to overstep the limits of reason, mortification has a role to fulfil in this matter. Saint Vincent de Paul knew the strength of family ties ; he had experienced it in even an aggravated form. He returned to his native place in 1622 and remained there for little more than a week. 'On the day I left home,' he relates, 'I was so grieved at leaving my dear relations that I did nothing else but cry the whole length of the journey, and I did so almost without

⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XII, p. 223.

ceasing. To these tears succeeded the idea of helping them, of establishing them in a better way of life, of giving this to that person, and that to another. In my mind, thus grown soft and tender, I divided up amongst them all that I had and all that I had not. I say it to my own confusion; I remained for three months with this unhappy passion for advancing the welfare of my brothers and sisters; it was a continual weight on my poor mind.^{'15}

This was the reason why the Saint always showed himself unwilling to grant permission to his followers to visit their relations. He remarked that : 'Parents often pretend they need us; they are not well off; they would like to be more comfortable; it is not that they are at the moment in urgent need, but they are fearful about the future because they have not confidence in God; or if they are in a poor way of living, they would be very glad to be able to live without working.'

Hence their words, strengthened by filial affection, disturb and shake us. Hence the loss of vocations. That is why Our Lord said : 'He who hates not father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own soul, cannot be my disciple.'—'He who hates not' here means 'he who does not act as if he hated.'¹⁶

Saint Vincent de Paul's spiritual teaching on the love of one's relations is, as we may see, quite conformable to evangelical doctrine, and his severity in permitting his Priests or Sisters to visit their homes is justified by the words of Christ.

The true servant of God is aware of another form of renunciation, the renouncement of his native land; whilst continuing to love the country where he was born, he is prepared to leave it, should obedience call him to far-off lands. Zeal knows no frontiers. Missionaries are the successors of the Apostles. Christ also repeats to them: 'Go, preach the Gospel to all nations.' Saint Vincent de Paul said to the men of his own age: 'Let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, the heart that will enable us to go everywhere, this heart of the Son of God ...

¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 219.
¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. XII, pp. 216–217.

which disposes us to go, as He went, and as He would have gone, in case His eternal wisdom judged it fitting, to work for the conversion of the poor people. To that end he sent out His Apostles; He sends us, like them, to cast fire in all Ignem veni mittere in terram et quid volo nisi ut directions. accendatur? To spread this divine fire in all directions, this fire of love, this fear of God, everywhere throughout the whole world, to Barbary, to the Indies, to Japan. . . . Ah ! gentlemen, let us all earnestly ask God for this spirit for the whole Company, which may carry us to all places, so that when one or two Missionaries are seen, men may say: "These are apostolic men on the point of setting out to the four quarters of the globe to spread the Word of God."' But nature may protest and say: 'Shall I have this or that in such a country?'-'O Saviour! God will never be wanting to us. . . . Let us go where God calls us ; He will be our provider, let us fear nothing.'17 Is not this an exquisite commentary on the words in which Christ promises a hundredfold to those who abandon all things to follow Him in this life, and eternal happiness in the next?

The Gospel does not call for a partial, but for a total renunciation : the renunciation of health, family, fatherland, friends, employments, rest ; in short, for all those pleasures that attract and satisfy us.

Together with humility, this doctrine of renunciation holds a prominent place in Saint Vincent de Paul's spiritual teaching. For these two virtues are the great pillars on which the spiritual edifice rests. Whoever possesses them will have no difficulty, aided by divine grace, in carrying his daily resolutions into practice; because thus armed, he will easily overcome every obstacle.

But in the spiritual life, it is not enough to be in possession of the means of overcoming the obstacles that may hinder us from acting; we also need a light by which we may be illuminated and guided. What are we to do? How are we to do it? Saint Vincent de Paul asks himself these questions and he answers us in the words God made use of towards Moses: 'Inspice et fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est; look upon and conform yourself

¹⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XI, p. 291.

to the model I have shown you on the mount': lift up your eyes to God, consider what He expects of you, and do not hesitate to satisfy His desires; lift your eyes also to Jesus Christ; God came on earth not only to redeem you by His blood but also to point out to you the road that leads to the gates of salvation.

Thus we have two rules to guide us : the will of God and the example of Our Divine Saviour.

In his letters and addresses Saint Vincent de Paul returns over and over again to the excellence of the practice which consists in conforming one's will to that of God. Saint Louise de Marillac who was delicate and easily fatigued, needed some little refreshment before leaving home to assist at Mass; she was deeply distressed at not being able to approach the holy table; a letter came to her from her director; she opened it and read: 'Our Lord is in constant communion with those who are united to what He wills and does not will.'¹⁸ Her son gave her much cause for anxiety; Saint Vincent de Paul was aware of the fact and wrote to her: 'Give the child and the mother to Our Lord. Let God work His will both in yourself and your child. Ah ! how little is needed to be utterly holy : just to do the will of God in all things.'¹⁹

At times Saint Louise de Marillac believed she saw the will of Our Lord in matters that were not in reality according to the Divine Will. She saw it, for instance, in a secret promise she had made to be faithful to certain pious exercises to which she was attached. Saint Vincent de Paul calmed her : 'As for all those thirty-three acts in honour of the sacred humanity, and certain other practices, do not worry yourself when you fail to carry them out. God is love and wishes us to go to Him by love. So do not look upon yourself as being obliged to carry out all these good resolutions.'²⁰ When we read these words we feel quite sure that he had less taste for odd devotional practices than had his penitent. Saint Louise de Marillac had to recognise this fact on other occasions.

He made a holocaust of himself by means of this con-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 233. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 36. ²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 86.

formity to the will of God. Saint-Lazare was on one occasion in financial straits owing to an unjust verdict given against its ownership of a farm at Orsigny. A friend offered his sympathy to Saint Vincent de Paul, who replied : 'Conformity to the will of God in adverse circumstances is of greater value than all temporal advantages.'²¹

He called such conformity an anticipation of Paradise,²² a perfect state,²³ a good beyond all others, the perfection of love. He preferred it to ecstasies.²⁴ He pointed out that it embraced both self-denial and the practice of the presence of God; self-denial, because it is said in the Gospel that only on this condition can we follow Jesus Christ; and the practice of the presence of God because when we unite our own will with the Divine Will we are then actually in possession of it.²⁵

Hence we are bound, like Saint Paul, to take great care in finding out what is the will of God. 'Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?' said the apostle and this should be our favourite formula. But how are we to arrive at this knowledge? Revelations are rare, and what we call an internal illumination is often only an illusion. The will of God is made manifest in the orders of superiors, in daily occurrences, in the advice given by competent persons, and lastly, by reflection accompanied by prayer.

Superiors represent God. God speaks through their mouths; He has said: 'He who hears you hears me, he who obeys you obeys me, and he who despises you despises me.' 'What a happiness for souls who are enamoured of this noble virtue to discover, and to be made assured as to what is the will of God !' Saint Vincent de Paul remarked on one occasion :²⁶ 'You who are faithful to obedience, be consoled. But as for you who find yourselves in a contrary state of mind, who are prepared to obey only in so far as what is commanded suits your own whims—and this may be seen when one obeys in certain points and not in others ; oh ! be fearful lest, instead of doing the will of God, you are only doing your own, or rather the devil's !'

²¹ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VII, p. 253.
²² Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 645.
²³ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 46.
²⁴ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 317.
²⁵ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 319.
²⁶ Ibid., Vol. X, p. 84.

The will of God is also made manifest by all that happens to us. It is He who directs all events. Sickness, losses, tempests, shipwrecks, all manner of unpleasant occurrences come from Him. To accept them with resignation is an acknowledgement of His Sovereign dominion; to accept them joyfully is a recognition of His infinite goodness, because it is an inner testimony that God is seeking our welfare in all circumstances.

The city of Genoa was ravaged by plague. Saint Vincent de Paul trembled for his Missionaries. Several of them died. After having opened his heart on the matter to his Community at Saint-Lazare he recalled the great principle in virtue of which grief is calmed by faith : 'Ah ! how very, very true it is, my brethren, that we should have great confidence in God, and place ourselves unreservedly in His hands, believing that His Providence arranges for our welfare and advantage all that it wills or suffers to happen to us ! Yes, whatsoever God gives or takes away is for our good since it is for His own good pleasure, and His pleasure in our welfare and happiness.'²⁷

It is not hard to see the will of God when we find ourselves if the presence of events independent of us, such as sickness, or commands coming from a higher authority; because in such cases God, in a manner, speaks to us in order to tell us what He expects from us. But these are special cases. When we do not hear Him speak how are we to be enlightened?

Saint Vincent de Paul's answer is : take advice, pray, reflect. It was to all these means, taken together and not separately, that he himself had recourse in order to give ear to the divine call. For many years he was a docile instrument in the hands of Father de Bérulle or Father Duval. His greatest undertakings were due to promptings that came to him from others. Madame de Gondi urged him to establish the Congregation of the Mission ; Saint Louise de Marillac, to gather together the first Sisters of Charity ; Madame Goussault, to establish the Ladies of Charity ; an eminent ecclesiastic to begin the Tuesday conferences. The voice of a person qualified to speak, such as the Queen, the Papal

²⁷ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. V, p. 48.

Nuncio, or a bishop, put an end to his hesitations. The expression of a wish, coming from such sources, was for him a command; nor was this mere condescension on his part, but obedience.

He never accepted an establishment for his Congregation until he had been begged to do so. 'Up to the present,' he wrote to one of his priests, 'Providence has called us wherever we are, without our having sought to go there either directly or indirectly.'²⁸

If one of his Superiors deviated from this line of conduct, a word from Paris pointed out his error. Father Desdames. the Superior of the Mission in Poland, was eager to see a residence for the Missionaries established in Cracow. Saint Vincent de Paul was not in so great a hurry and cooled his disciple's ardour by the following lines : 'We have determined to put off sending you any men until Providence gives us an occasion of making use of and maintaining them there; and this may happen when we least think of it. God does not manage His affairs according to our views and wishes. If we are faithful over a few things, He will place us over many. Let us leave all to Him and keep in our shells. The Company began without any idea of ours; it has multiplied by God's guidance alone, and was called to Poland by higher orders, without our having contributed anything but holy obedience. Let us go on, sir, acting in the same way; God will be best pleased with such abandonment and we shall be at peace. The spirit of the world is restless and eager to do all things; let us leave it alone. We do not wish to choose our own paths but to walk along such as God may be pleased to mark out for us. Let us consider ourselves unworthy of being employed by Him, or that men should think of us, and then we are all right. Let us offer ourselves to Him to do all and to suffer all for His glory and the edification of His Church; that is all He demands. If He wishes for results, they are in Him and not in us. Let us enlarge our hearts and wills in His sight, without determining on this or that until He speaks.'29

Before coming to a decision there is, then, a period of

²⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VI, p. 308.

²⁹ Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 515.



ANDREW DUVAL

suspense and during this interval we should have recourse to God in prayer. No one realised better than Saint Vincent de Paul how powerless we are when left to ourselves; success depends on God and not on us; and God gives it to those who trust in Him and implore His assistance.

But it would be an error to think that prayer alone is sufficient. The Saint was not one of those mystics who act under the influence of a sudden interior illumination that comes in moments of fervour. He had too much experience not to recognise the fact that real illusions are often concealed beneath what are apparent inspirations.

Prayer should be accompanied by the precautions demanded by prudence. There is a proverb that says 'God helps those who help themselves' and Saint Vincent adopted it, only adding to it the phrase 'provided you implore His aid.' His method is explained perfectly in the following lines written to one of his priests : 'I approve of the maxim of making use of all lawful and possible means for the glory of God just as if God were not about to help us, provided that we expect all things from His Divine Providence as if we had no human resources.' The just mean between human prudence and an exaggerated mysticism could not be better expressed. The writings and discourses of Saint Vincent de Paul provide us with all the necessary elements for drawing up the main lines of any scheme of undertakings.

What he demands first of all before action, is a state of indifference; not a state of pure passivity, but a state of expectation, that is to say a mind ever on the alert to discover the indications of Providence, and a will prepared to carry them out. In the advice which he gave his priests he gladly recalled the fact that all his own works were begun in this way: 'The good that God wishes to be done is accomplished as if by itself, without our ever thinking of it; it was in this way our Congregation was born, that the Company of the Sisters of Charity arose, that the Society of the Ladies of Charity for the assistance of the poor in the General Hospital in Paris and the sick in the parishes was established, that the care of foundlings was undertaken, in fine, that all the works we now find ourselves in charge of were begun. And not a single one of them was started by design on our part, but God Himself, who wished to be served in these circumstances, raised them up quietly and imperceptibly; and if He made use of us, we never knew to what the work was leading. Hence it is that we allow Him to act, and are now just as far from being in a hurry about making progress as we were in the beginning. . . . Be rather passive, than active.'³⁰ On one occasion he went on to say, speaking of these same foundations: 'It seems to me, and this is clearly demonstrable, that if they had been made before they actually were, they would not have been made well. I say that about the whole of them, not excepting a single one. And hence it is I have a special devotion to follow, step by step, the adorable Providence of God.'³¹

A state of indifference is therefore the first step. Yet an occasion may arise which will be an indication to us to abandon it and proceed to action. For example, a benefactor may appear and offer to provide for some good work. Is not this the moment for decision? No, not yet. A new era has begun : a period of prayer and reflection which will be a preparation for accepting or refusing. An immediate acceptance would be an imprudence. At first sight we only regard appearances and these are often deceptive.

Saint Vincent de Paul was once asked to accept a wealthy priory for his Congregation, and he replied : 'I think we should do well to leave it alone for the present, both for the sake of blunting our natural desire, which urges us to execute promptly what is to our advantage, and that we may practise holy indifference, thus giving Our Lord an opportunity of manifesting what is His will, whilst we refer the matter to Him in the meantime. If He wishes us to accept it, then to defer doing so will not spoil anything, and there will be less of self and more of God about it.'³²

'To blunt one's natural inclination' was the primary object which the holy priest pursued in thus reserving his decision. He feared lest self should exercise too strong an influence on the will to the detriment of what should be directed towards God. When it was first suggested to him

³⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. IV, p. 122.

³¹ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 208. ³² Ibid., Vol. V, p. 534.

to found a society of priests to give missions throughout the country, he was pleased with the idea ; it haunted his mind, he was anxious to begin as soon as possible. But this anxiety made him distrustful ; he was afraid of acting from a natural or diabolical impulse, so he made a retreat ; and as he prayed he felt his anxiety begin to disappear.

Before coming to a decision Saint Vincent de Paul sought for information and prudently weighed the reasons for and against. If he was offered an establishment, he made enquiries to find out if the revenues were sufficient for the maintenance of the priests or Sisters who were being sought for ; if accepting it might not give rise to disputes or lawsuits ; if there was work to be done, and that work conformable to the end of either of his Congregations ; lastly, if the bishop of the place was willing. To be all the more certain of not deceiving himself, he used first to take counsel with God in prayer, and then with wise and prudent persons.

If the work proposed to him seemed to have all the marks of one desired by God, then Saint Vincent de Paul accepted it. It was his wish that a beginning should be made quietly, and in a small way, without any ostentation. Father Codoing, the Superior of the House at Rome, was not so inclined to go quietly. On more than one occasion he was severely reprimanded. Each of the letters arriving from Paris carried a repetition of the same piece of advice. 'The affairs of God are accomplished little by little and almost imperceptibly. His spirit is neither violent nor hasty'33 ... 'God always gives a greater blessing to humble beginnings than to those that start with a chiming of bells '34 -'I should like your house to be neither sumptuous nor ostentatious. The works of God are done in one fashion, and the world's in another.'35

The first Superior of the house at Turin, Father Martin, made up his mind to begin his ministry by a great mission in order to attract popular attention; to this end he asked a Missionary from Father Blatiron, the Superior at Genoa. When Saint Vincent heard of it he was displeased and wrote: 'You must not give a mission that will create a stir;

³³ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 226. ³⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 314. ³⁵ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 387.

it is far more fitting for you to commence such an undertaking by an act of humiliation. Begin in a small way and have a great love for your own abjection ; that is the spirit of Our Lord; that was the way in which He acted and that is the means of drawing down His grace.'36

He was not displeased to see a work developing, once it had been undertaken, but even here he was governed by the same principles; no hurry, let God act, do not anticipate Divine Providence, but follow it step by step. If we are forced to go fast then let us hasten slowly.'37 Saint Vincent de Paul was not the slightest bit distressed that his Congregation consisted for years of a very small number of men; God thus gave them an opportunity of honouring ' the small number of His Son's disciples.' 38

Should obstacles arise and retard the development of a work, or even throw it back, there is no need to be astonished because the works of God suffer persecution, but abide without fail. The man whom God has chosen as an instrument of His will has not the right to run away. When one of his priests spoke of resuming his liberty, or of entering another Community, Saint Vincent de Paul sought to retain him, stating that a serious resolution, taken after mature deliberation and much prayer, should be regarded as coming from God, and that consequently we conform ourselves to the Divine Will by persevering in it. And hence he showed himself admirably tenacious in carrying on any good work he had once undertaken.

When one is acquainted with the amazing extent of the works created by Saint Vincent de Paul, one is surprised to hear that he wearied those who were about him by his slowness in beginning. And yet it is this very slowness which explains the fruitfulness of his efforts, because it explains their success. Fruitfulness is not measured by activity, which often results in sheer waste, but by the natural and supernatural wisdom of the person who acts. One who goes forward slowly but surely, reaches his goal more quickly than a more rapid traveller who is forced to halt or turn back. Saint Vincent de Paul lost no time ; each step he

³⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. V, p. 479. ³⁷ Ihid. Vol. II, p. 276. ³⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 312.

took marked an advance, because his deeds unfolded themselves according to a plan that had been designed by God, and also because he reproduced in his own life the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, so that he might be more certain that he was not being deceived.

The example and teaching of the Incarnate Son of God constituted his second rule of action.

'A master like Saint Vincent,' as M. George Goyau³⁹ has so well said, 'has himself a master, and this master is Jesus Christ; and we might gather from his correspondence and discourses a whole series of delightful remarks, sometimes unexpected, and make a little book out of them that could be called the Imitation of Jesus Christ according to Saint Vincent de Paul. On the horizon of Saint Vincent there was always the figure of the Son of God. . . . He went through Our Lord's life incident by incident, I might almost say moment by moment, to find therein lessons as to what he should do.'

It was the Saint's wish that each of his priests and Sisters could say with Saint Paul: 'I live, or rather it is not I who live, but Jesus Christ who liveth in me.' Hence he used to say: 'O Lord ! what a happiness to be your pupils !'40 - 'Angels would become incarnate, if that were possible, so that they might come on earth to imitate the examples and virtues of the Son of God '41-' It is always a blessing for us to find ourselves in the states through which Our Lord and Master has passed.'42_' I have such a profound conviction of the truths Our Lord has taught us by word and example that I cannot but see that all things done according to them succeed perfectly and what is not so done does quite the reverse.'43_' Christian prudence consists in judging, speaking and acting as the Eternal Wisdom of God, clothed in our weak flesh, has judged, spoken and acted.'44

Saint Vincent de Paul gives no piece of advice that is not

³⁹ La vie, les livres et les âmes, Paris, 1923, p. 84.

⁴⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XII, p. 185.

- ⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 117. ⁴² Ibid., Vol. V, p. 410.
- 43 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 281.
- 44 Abelly, op. cit., Bk. III, Ch. XVI, p. 250.

VOL. III.-2 B

first of all based on the example of Jesus Christ; this was for him an absolute necessity. If he suggests to Saint Louise de Marillac to be a little severe, he does so in these terms : 'The gentleness of your disposition needs a tiny drop of vinegar; borrow a little of it from Our Lord. Ah! Mademoiselle, how well He knew how to find the bitter-sweet when it was needed !'45 If he urges her not to be uneasy, Our Lord is still there, ever present to his sight: 'You will honour the tranquillity of Our Lord's soul by a perfect acquiescence in the Divine Will.'⁴⁶ When she was impatient to consecrate herself to the service of the poor he calms this impatience in the following words: [•] Ever hold in honour the passivity and the hidden state of the Son of God.'47

Our Lord is the model whom he proposes in all circumstances. He is the model of discretion : 'In this matter, honour the silence of Our Lord ;' the model of humility : if we could see into 'His adorable heart, we should find without fail that humility was especially imprinted on it ;'48 the model of poverty: 'It is a mark of God's goodness towards us to have such an occasion of honouring the state of Our Lord, who had no dwelling-place on earth';49 a model of sympathy : 'The Son of God wept for Lazarus ; why should you not weep for that dear soul?' 50

Once again he proposes Our Lord as a model for early rising : 'If Our Lord left Paradise for our sakes and reduced Himself to such a state of poverty that He had no place whereon to lay His head, how much more should we leave our beds to go to Him';⁵¹ and He is a model to us in His avoidance of legal proceedings: 'I am in a state of wonder at Our Lord Jesus Christ who condemned lawsuits, and yet consented to be a party to one, which he lost ';52 again, on the renunciation of family ties : 'You know that Our Lord returned to His own native place on only one occasion, and what happened to Him then, which was

- 52 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 434.

⁴⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 394.
⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 111.
⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 62.
⁴⁸ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 200.
⁴⁹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 128.
⁵¹ Ibid., Vol. III, p. 537.

that His own people wished to cast Him from the summit of a hill.'⁵³ Even lunatics reminded him of Our Saviour who 'wished to be a stumbling-block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles.'⁵⁴

When Saint Vincent de Paul established his Congregation of the Mission, he still kept Our Lord in view, and proposed to continue His works by the same means. 'Are we not really very fortunate,'⁵⁵ he said to one of his disciples, 'in carrying out so exactly the vocation of Jesus Christ? For what gives a better representation of the life that Jesus Christ led on earth than the life of a Missionary?'

All Congregations tend to the love of God, 'but they love Him in different ways: the Carthusians by solitude, the Capuchins by poverty, others by singing the divine praises; '⁵⁶ it was Saint Vincent de Paul's desire that the special character of his Company should be the imitation of Jesus Christ by preaching the Gospel to the poor and the training of ecclesiastics; and he believed that if his children were to carry out their duties fittingly they must needs walk in the footsteps of the Saviour, chiefly in all that concerns the practice of the virtues of humility, simplicity, meekness, mortification and zeal, which virtues he was accustomed to call 'the -faculties of the soul of the Congregation.'⁵⁷

The members of the Congregation of the Mission have no other spiritual doctrine than that of their holy founder. Pupils of his school, trained according to his spirit, they are accustomed to regard divine things as he regarded them, and are less inclined to speculation than to action. Morning prayer is their strength, humility and sacrifice their weapons; the will of God and the imitation of Jesus Christ their rules. Their spirituality may be summed up in these few words which are a summary of the spiritual teaching of Saint Vincent de Paul.

53	Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 353.	⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 24.
55	Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 133.	⁵⁶ Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 262.
57	Ibid., Vol. XII, p. 298.	

CHAPTER LXIV

PORTRAITS

LMOST everybody has seen a portrait of Saint Vincent de Paul, for they may be found scattered in all directions. His countenance has been reproduced by every means which the artist has at his disposal and has been transferred to paper and canvas, marble and bronze. Painters, etchers, engravers and sculptors, each in his own way, have made him live again. It may be said that his countenance is unique. He is always represented as a man on the threshold of his eightieth year. and therefore, 'by Time's fell hand defaced.' The sight of this bald-headed old man, almost toothless, with wrinkled brows and face worn by long years of labour, affords us no help in forming an idea of what he was like in his prime, still less in his early manhood.

Abelly, his friend and contemporary, supplies us with the following portrait: 'Monsieur Vincent was of medium height and well proportioned; his head was rather bald and large, but well made and in proportion to the rest of his body; the brow was broad and majestic, the countenance neither too fat nor too thin. His aspect was mild, his eye penetrating, his hearing acute, his bearing grave, his gravity benign, his countenance open and simple; he was most easy of access and of a marvellously kind and amiable disposition. He was of a bilious and sanguine temperament, and his health fairly strong and robust.'¹

His features, no doubt, are somewhat homely and heavy; one can still discern traces of the peasant who has not been transformed by city life. His large nose, long ears, stronglymarked brows and powerful chin remind us of his origin, yet all his features reflect his transcendent nobility of soul. One cannot fail to be struck by the combined fire, gentleness

¹ Op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XIX, p. 73.

and penetration of the eyes, by the delicacy and kindness of the mouth and by the majesty of the brow. If Saint Vincent, as depicted by artists, is not beautiful in the æsthetic sense of the word, nevertheless he is so by the radiance of those moral virtues which embellished his soul and shone through its material envelope.

We may add that he despised all the means which were then employed to convey an appearance of elegance, for affectation in any shape or form was certainly not one of his failings, nor, indeed, was vanity. Many of his admirers wished to have his portrait; he was asked to sit to several artists, and, indeed, plagued to do so by the Abbé de la Pinsonnière, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and the Ladies of Charity in particular,² but to all their requests he proved adamantine. However, all the determination was not on one side; a little conspiracy was hatched against him, and, though quite unconscious of it, he was beaten in this battle between veneration and humility. The plan was well thought out; an artist was asked to go and stay at Saint-Lazare as often as he pleased ; a place suitable for careful observation was arranged for him in the church or the refectory where he could have his model constantly under his eves. As soon as he had studied his subject sufficiently. he retired to a room that was reserved for him and at once set to work.³ This method, which was the only one possible. had three drawbacks : the artist was frequently obliged to interrupt his work, he had to depend to a great extent on memory, and he had to submit to the changes of position of a model to whom he could give no orders. It was obvious that the most celebrated portrait-painters then in Paris would not agree to such conditions; it was useless to approach them, and hence it was thought best to secure an artist of less ability and one who was, as far as possible, certain of a welcome at Saint-Lazare. The name of Simon Francovs was suggested, and in the end it was he who was selected.

This artist, a native of Tours, had a nephew in the ² Brother Cholier's deposition at the Process of Beatification of Saint Vincent de Paul, July 13, 1705. ³ Notes et remarques sur les vertus de M. Vincent de Paul, par le

⁸ Notes et remarques sur les vertus de M. Vincent de Paul, par le Frère Robineau, ms., p. 30. Seminary at Mans, which was then in charge of the Priests of the Mission.⁴ His output, of which nothing now remains, was even then considerable and his paintings adorned the walls of a number of churches including those of the Oratory. the Minims in the Place Royale and the professed house of the Jesuit Fathers. He accepted the commission and set to work under the prescribed conditions. Brother Chollier, in his evidence at the Process of Beatification, gives a detail that does not seem probable; he says that the artist was assigned a room next to Saint Vincent and was thus able to see his model through a hole in the partition wall. Τt must be admitted that it would have been a gross breach of good manners, to say the least of it, to violate in this way the privacy of a saint who had at least the right to some little solitude, and it is hard to believe that Father Alméras would not have seen the impropriety of such a proceeding. Moreover, Brother Robineau, who was the first to relate the story of this portrait, does not mention the incident. Simon Françoys finished the portrait in 1660, after working on it for several years.⁵ It was not a mere drawing, but an actual oil-painting, as we are informed by Nicholas Pitau, Peter van Schuppen, René Lochon and Gerard Edelinck, all of whom made engravings of Simon Françoys' portrait, which were widely disseminated.⁶

⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, p. 349.

⁵ This has been deduced from Brother Robineau's remark : 'It was necessary, some years before his death, to bring a painter here, who, without being seen or recognised by him, painted him, not without much difficulty and devoting much time to it, taking occasion to see M. Vincent at one time when he was officiating in the Church on solemn feasts, and at another, when he was celebrating Holy Mass; and again watching him whilst at his meals, for he used to be in the refectory towards the end of his life, when he had heard Holy Mass which he could no longer celebrate on account of his infirmities.' (Notes et remarques sur les vertus de M. Vincent de Paul, p. 30.)

⁶ Pitau : 'Simon Françoys pinxit'; van Schuppen : 'Simon François Turonen, pinxit ad vivum'; Lochon : 'Saint François Turo. pingebat'; Edelinck : 'Simon François pinx.' We do not share Didron's doubts, who, despite these testimonies, was not certain whether Françoys had made a picture or a drawing. (Notes sur l'iconographie de Saint Vincent de Paul dans les Petites Annales de Saint Vincent de Paul, January, 1902, pp. 10-11.)

The differences to be observed in these engravings have given rise to a theory that Françoys painted two portraits of Saint Vincent; one in out-door costume, engraved by Pitau and Edelinck, and the other in choir dress, by van Schuppen and Lochon. Pitau's engraving is characterised, as far as the countenance is concerned, by a large number of details, which distinguish it from van Schuppen's. In the latter, the smile is much more clearly indicated; the parallel wrinkles on the forehead more pronounced, and the two vertical lines springing from the base of the nose more marked.⁷ These differences, however, do not necessarily imply that there were two portraits, for engravers are not accustomed to copy slavishly the works of painters; they preserve a certain amount of independence.

Maynard seemed inclined to think that the Daughters of Charity at Moutiers-Saint-Jean possessed the original Françoys which served as a model for van Schuppen⁸ and E. Didron, the one copied by Pitau⁹ and now in the possession of the legal adviser of the Congregation of the Mission at Paris. These, however, are simple conjectures based upon points of resemblance between the pictures and engravings; these conjectures might be endlessly discussed, for there are discrepancies to be explained as well as points of resemblance.

The first engraving, that of Nicolas Pitau, appeared in Paris in 1660; the artist was a native of Antwerp, twentynine years old, whose colour-schemes are soft and harmonious and who was undoubtedly a clever, brilliant painter. Saint Vincent is set in a rectangular frame of oak-leaves; at the base there is a eulogy of the Saint and a dedication to Queen Anne of Austria, signed 'Simon Françoys.'¹⁰ A second engraving, in 1663, was the work of Peter van Schuppen, who was also a native of Antwerp, but though

⁷ Un nouveau portrait de Saint Vincent de Paul, par Léon Le Monnier dans les Petites Annales de Saint Vincent de Paul, April 15, 1901, p. 111.

⁸ Maynard, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 292.

⁹ Op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁰ In the *Bibliothèque Nationale* there is an engraving of Pitau's at another stage of the process, undated, and the text is given in Latin.

characterised by greater precision of line and more harmonious colouring, it has not Pitau's sparkle and vivacity.¹¹ In 1664, Abelly published his *Vie du Vénérable Vincent de Paul* with a frontispiece from an engraving by René Lochon, a Dutch artist, which is better than van Schuppen's but not as good as Pitau's. In 1770 Perault, the author of *Hommes illustres*, inserted in his book a new engraving by Gerard Edelinck which is not as good as either of the first three.

With Edelinck, an era of decadence set in which lasted during the whole of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, notwithstanding the splendour with which the feasts of the Beatification and Canonisation were celebrated, but which did nothing for sound, artistic taste.¹²

It has been said that the Jansenists had something to do with this debasing of Saint Vincent's portraits, but this assertion, first made half a century ago, rests on no solid foundation and will not bear examination. We shall continue our examination of the seventeenth-century portraits, as the others possess no features that merit our attention, and the painting by Simon Françoys is not the only one that deserves to be made known.

In the first place there is the portrait of Saint Vincent as first Superior General of the Congregation which is preserved in the sacristy of the Mother House of the Priests of the Mission in Paris. We can trace the history of this picture from two documents. Early in the nineteenth century, Cardinal Maury wrote: 'There was a very beautiful original portrait, formerly in the possession of Queen Anne of Austria, at the Invalides. These good Missionaries had chained up the frame to prevent its being stolen, and yet this masterpiece has disappeared. No other portrait of this great man can approach the expression so full of soul and vitality that may be discerned in this beautiful

¹¹ Van Schuppen's engraving may be found in the *Cabinet* des Estampes and, like Pitau's, in two states. The first, probably a rough proof, does not bear either a date or the name of the artist. Neither of them has an inscription.

¹² M. Henri Lavedan has very kindly presented an eighteenth century portrait of Saint Vincent de Paul to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission. It is one of the best examples of the art of that epoch.

painting.'13 The picture was not lost, but was concealed during the troubled times of the Revolution. A former chaplain at the Invalides handed it over in 1800 to Father Viguier, Priest of the Mission, who took it a fortnight afterwards to Father Hanon, Vicar General of the Congregation. A declaration signed in his name and in those of two former chaplains, Desmottes and Colombot, accompanied the gift, testifying to the fact that the picture had formerly hung at the Invalides, and had been chained and padlocked by the Missionaries. After the signatures Father Hanon wrote : 'The tradition in existence amongst our confrères at the Invalides was to the effect that this picture of Saint Vincent had been painted when he was sixty-eight vears old and that he was, of course, ignorant of the fact.' If Father Hanon is correct, the portrait represents the Saint as he was twelve years before his death, but he may have been mistaken and the tradition at the Invalides unreliable. Finally, lower down on the document are the following words written by James Perboyre, brother of the martyr of that name : 'This portrait is now in the sacristy in a new frame.' Before placing the canvas in the frame, the edges had been trimmed in order that the portrait might be of the same dimensions as those of the other Superiors General, and for the same reason, an inscription was added at the top : '1576, Saint Vincent de Paul, 1660.' This picture is the most precious of all, both on account of its first owner, Queen Anne of Austria, who may perhaps have commissioned it, and the precautions taken by the Fathers at the Invalides to prevent its being stolen. Everything leads us to believe that the artist was not unknown, and he may perhaps have been Simon Françoys. In recent times this picture has become the most widely spread of all by means of prints and engravings.

The portrait in possession of the legal adviser of the Congregation of the Mission also recalls, despite some obvious retouches, seventeenth-century work. Its resemblance to Pitau's engraving is most striking, and possibly one may have served as a model for the other. The most noticeable

¹³ Lettre inédite de L. M. Desbiey au graveur J. H. B. Grateloup, dans la Revue de Gascogne, 1906, pp. 342 and foll. difference is the position of the head, which is placed at a different angle. There is nothing to prove that it was, as has been conjectured, painted by Françoys, but again there is nothing to prove that it was not. From the historical point of view, the origin of this picture is most obscure, It has been supposed that M. Clairet, a notary, received it as a gift from the Congregation of the Mission out of gratitude for his kindness in preserving the body of Saint Vincent de Paul in his own house during the great Revolution. It has certainly hung for more than a century in the lawyer's office. When Bouclier retired, he took it with him to Bougival; during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, his house was occupied by Germans and the portrait disappeared. The canvas was afterwards discovered in a neighbouring park folded in four and badly damaged. Bouclier's daughter sent it back to the chambers from which it had disappeared, and Bourin gladly accepted the work of art which was then restored by the expert Haro.¹⁴

In the Church of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, at the back of the choir on the Gospel side, there is a chapel dedicated to Saint Vincent, in which, above the tabernacle, hangs a large picture, one metre high, eighty centimetres wide, excluding the frame. It is easy to see, without looking behind the frame where the name is inscribed, that the figure represents Saint Vincent. The painting is, roughly speaking, a three-quarter-length, full-face, life-size portrait; he wears a surplice, holds a biretta in his right hand and rests his left on a book. On close inspection it is clear that the picture has been enlarged and on the added portion one can easily read : ' Painted by Sebastian Bourdon in 1649.' Neither the name nor the date, which were subsequently added, is in any way authentic, though they possibly may be reproductions of previous inscriptions. However that may be, competent authorities decline to give a decision on the authenticity either of the date or of the artist.15

Stephen Bourdon, born at Montpellier in 1616, was one

14 Ed. Didron, op. cit., pp. 11 and foll.

¹⁵ Inventaire général des richesses d'art de la France, Paris, Monuments religieux, Paris, Plon, 1876–1901, 3 vols. in 4°, Vol. I, p. 310.

of the best-known painters of his time, and his works may be found in various collections; there are seventeen in the Louvre, others in various churches of Paris, and in galleries at Munich, Cassel, Madrid, Naples and Florence. He painted portraits, landscapes, and historical and religious subjects. His biographer, Charles Ponsonailhe, writes: 'This daring and violentlyen ergetic master who painted twelve portraits in a day and spoiled the preliminary sketches of his best works by returning on them, never gave his sitters time either to choose a pose or to assume the expression they would have liked to transmit to posterity. In his canvases, the likeness was, so to say, brutally seized ; the man was set out there before us without the omission of a wrinkle or a blemish.'¹⁶

We have dealt with paintings and engravings and shall now just mention a drawing made in 1654 by Angélique Labory, an unknown artist of whom we have been unable to discover any information. The Saint Vincent she depicts differs considerably from other contemporary portraits; heaviness has given place to refinement; the countenance is not so full; it has been somewhat elongated, and it appealed so strongly to Abbé Bremond that he refused to have any other portrait for his great and delightful Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France.¹⁷ His preference is shared by Abbé Degert who writes :18 ' The smiling countenance is irradiated by a ray of intelligence, of shrewd kindliness and distinction not to be found in the same degree in any other portrait.' The original, long preserved in the de Comet family, for whom it would seem Angélique Labory intended it, has been preserved for the last twenty years in the house of the Mission at Saint Vincent de Paul's birthplace.

We should never come to an end if we were to pass in review all the other portraits, for there are thousands of them; moreover, they are all of little or no value. We shall

¹⁶ Sébastien Bourdon, sa vie, son œuvre, Paris, 1883, p. 237.

¹⁷ Vol. III, p. 228.

¹⁸ Un nouveau portrait de Saint Vincent de Paul, par P. Coste, dans la Revue de Gascogne, 1907, p. 369.

not even deal with those of Chalette¹⁹ and of Philippe de Champagne, or with the busts at Argenteuil or at the British Museum, London, which have been erroneously considered to be portrait busts of the Saint.

Before ending this chapter, we should like to remind the reader of the quatrain beneath Lochon's engraving which forms the frontispiece of Abelly's life²⁰:

Si tu veux dans un seul visage Voir le portrait de deux grands saints, Ici Paul et Vincent sont peints, Mais pour l'esprit, lis cet ouvrage.

¹⁹ On this portrait see Léon Le Monnier, Un nouveau portrait de Saint de Paul, in les Petites Annales de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, April 15, 1901, p. 105 and foll.

²⁰ 'If you wish to behold the portrait of two great Saints in one countenance, Paul and Vincent are here depicted; to see his soul, read this book.'

CHAPTER LXV

ILLNESSES AND DEATH

A LTHOUGH Saint Vincent had a robust constitution, he was not exempt from illnesses during his long life. He frequently visited the sick in the infirmary of Saint-Lazare and used to say, in order to encourage and console them : 'Don't be afraid, brother ; I had that illness when I was young, and was cured of it. I used to suffer from breathlessness and do so no longer ; I have also suffered from hernia, and God has cured me of it; I have had violent attacks of headache which have quite vanished, and also lung and stomach troubles from which I have recovered. So just have a little patience ; there is every reason to hope your illness will pass away, and that God still wishes to make use of you.'¹

As he was very sensitive to changes of atmosphere, he caught cold easily and suffered even more frequently from slight attacks of fever which generally lasted two or three days, although sometimes for a fortnight or longer. It was a type of fever then known as 'tertian' and Saint Vincent himself used to refer to it as 'my little fever,' doubtless, to distinguish it from 'quartan fever' which was more weakening and lasted longer, and of which he used to have attacks every six months.

From time to time, attacks of severe illness brought the thought of death before his mind; he had one, for instance, in 1615 whilst residing with the de Gondis, and it proved to be the beginning of serious leg trouble from which he suffered during the remainder of his life, notwithstanding several visits to the Spa at Forges-les-Eaux.² At times, he

¹ Abelly, op. cit., Vol. I, Ch. L, pp. 243 and foll; Vol. III, pp. 109, 408, 430, 448; Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. XIII, pp. 175 and foll. ² Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 63.

suffered so much pain as to be unable to walk or even to remain standing upright, and he then had to take to his The illness entered on its second phase about 1631, bed. and from that date onward he could no longer take long journeys on foot, but had to go on horseback. In the end, even riding fatigued him, and it became more and more difficult for him to mount and dismount, especially after an illness in 1644 which brought him to death's door. This was an attack of fever, and when he grew delirious, he was frequently heard to say: In spiritu humilitatis et in animo contrito suscipiamur a te, Domine. The Community prayed fervently for his recovery, and one of the patients in the infirmary, Father Dufour, offered his life in place of the founder's. Shortly afterwards, the latter began to improve, whilst the former sank rapidly. One night Saint Vincent distinctly heard three raps on the door of his room, and when it was opened there was nobody there. As if he had a presentiment of the death of his confrère, he called the clerical student who was staying up with him, and they recited the breviary together and part of the office for the dead. On the following morning, they learned that Father Dufour has passed away during the night.³ In 1640, when at Richelieu, he had long and violent attacks of tertian fever and was forced to return to Paris in a carriage ; he was then ordered by the Archbishop not to ride in future and always to travel in a carriage. Again in 1653, his life was in danger.⁴ He was confined to his room for the whole of the month of March in 1655,5 had a fresh attack of fever in November of that year, when one of his legs became so inflamed that he could not move. The weather was bitterly cold, and the room he then occupied could not be heated; the doctor gave orders to have him moved to a room with a fire-place, and his orders were carried out. The Saint quietly allowed himself to be moved every day from his bed to a place near the fire and afterwards put back to bed.⁶ His health was seriously injured by this bout of illness ; his knees had become inflamed, had lost

- ⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. II, p. 481.
- ⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 241. ⁵ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 350.
- ⁶ Ibid., pp. 464-467.

their suppleness, and he could only bend with great difficulty. Henceforward, he suffered severely every time he had to stand up, and he could only walk with the aid of a stick ; he had attacks of fever more and more frequently and his frame was utterly exhausted in the last five years of his life. An accident in 1658, made matters a great deal worse ; in January of that year, as he was returning home from the city, accompanied by a priest, the carriage-traces broke ; his head struck the pavement with great violence, with the result that he had an exceptionally severe attack of fever, which gave rise to the greatest uneasiness.⁷

The winter of 1658–1659 caused the ulcers in his legs to re-open, and he was again unable to move. As he thought he was dying, he wished to take a last farewell, and to send a final message of gratitude to the two great benefactors who had given him so much help in his undertakings, Cardinal de Retz and Father de Gondi of the Oratory.

'My Lord,' he wrote to the former, 'I have reason to think that this will be the last time I shall have the honour of writing to Your Eminence, on account of my age and an illness from which I am suffering and which may, perhaps, bring me before the judgement seat of God. Fearing this, My Lord, I very humbly beg Your Eminence's forgiveness if I have in any way displeased you. I have been wretched enough to do so, without any intention on my part, but I have never done so of design. I also take courage, My Lord, to recommend the little Company of the Mission to Your Eminence, who founded, maintained and bestowed your favour on it and, as it is the work of your hands, it is, too, most grateful and most obedient as to its father and prelate. Whilst it will pray to God on earth for Your Eminence and for the house of de Retz, I too will recommend both the one and the other to Him in Heaven, if His divine goodness grants me the grace to admit me there, as I trust He will out of His mercy and with the help of your blessing.' The same sentiments are expressed in his letter to Father de Gondi; he asked forgiveness for the displeasure caused by his ' country manners,' thanked him for the ' charitable

⁷ Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 53.

forbearance' accorded to his miseries and for the 'innumerable benefits' which he had received.⁸

As a matter of fact, these letters did not prove to be a final farewell, but, as far as Saint Vincent was concerned. life and suffering meant the same thing for the whole course of another year. The slightest movement was a torture; in March, he was able to write that one leg had healed and that the other was getting better.⁹ but summer did not bear out the promise of spring, and an inflammation of the eyes added to his sufferings.¹⁰ The doctor ordered an application of freshly killed pigeon's blood, but when the brother infirmarian brought the live bird into Saint Vincent's room and was about to kill it, the sick man cried out : 'This innocent creature is an image of the Saviour : don't kill it. God can cure me by some other means.'

He had been unable to leave the house since early in 1658, but still managed to go down to the church for praver, to celebrate Mass and to preside over meetings of the Sisters and of the Priests who were members of the Tuesday conferences. From the time when his limbs refused to mount or descend the steps in the sacristy, the vestments were placed upon the altar, and he used to say laughingly: 'Here I am now become a great nobleman and on a level with the bishops.' At the end of 1659,11 he was suffering more acutely than ever; a fresh attack rendered him unable to descend to the church, and he had to content himself with celebrating Mass in the infirmary Shortly afterwards, a still heavier sacrifice was chapel. demanded of him, for he was now unable to stand upright, and consequently could no longer celebrate Mass; he dragged himself painfully along on crutches from his room to the little chapel to assist at the Holy Sacrifice and to receive Holy Communion. At last, he was unable to do

⁸ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VII, pp. 435-436. ⁹ Ibid., p. 461. ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 625.

¹¹ The last meeting of the Sisters at which he was present was held on November 27, 1659; his conferences to the Sisters were interrupted on December 14 and those to the Missionaries on December 19. In 1660 he assembled the Sisters on three separate occasions and the Ladies of Charity once, but in quite special circumstances and for grave reasons.

even that, and in July, 1660, it was suggested to him that either the next room to his own should be turned into a chapel or that he should be carried in a chair to the infirmary every morning. After a prolonged resistance, he accepted the first proposal, and on August 15, entered his new chapel for the first time.

During the day the serous fluids caused by the ulcers in the legs flowed so abundantly as to reach his feet and wet his stockings through, and they even formed a little stream along the floor; at night, they were confined to the joints of the knees. The violence and continuity of his sufferings were gradually wearing him out, but he never complained, or rather his complaints consisted in devout ejaculations such as: 'Oh! my Saviour! my dear Saviour!' and whenever he uttered these words his eves turned lovingly to a little wooden crucifix placed opposite him quite close to his chair. During the night, each and every change of position caused him intolerable pain in the legs; the slightest movement of his hands when attempting to grasp a large cord attached to one of the beams in the ceiling was extremely painful, and yet he could not lift himself without doing so. One may guess the inconveniences resulting from such a condition, which was almost that of paralysis. His appetite disappeared. Out of obedience to his physician and also to please the Duchess of Aiguillon¹² who was untiring in her suggestions to the superiors at Saint-Lazare, he promised to take some soup and a little chicken every day, but as his stomach refused to retain them, he was dispensed from his promise.

Though his physical condition was so weak, his moral vigour still remained intact. His countenance, always mild and affable, did not give the slightest indication of the tortures he was enduring. If he was asked as to how he felt he used to reply: 'Our Lord suffered far more than I do,' or, 'It is nothing in comparison with what my sins have deserved' and, if the visitor himself were suffering from any complaint or infirmity, Saint Vincent skilfully

¹² See a letter from the Duchess of Aiguillon to Brother Ducournau (Arch. of the provincial house of the Priests of the Mission, Turin).

VOL. III.-2 C

turned the conversation so as to sympathise with his visitor s illness. He was not afraid of death ; he had been long preparing to meet it and did so twice a day : once in the morning, at his thanksgiving after Mass when he recited the pravers for those in their agony and those for a departing soul, and again at night before he went to sleep. A Father at Saint-Lazare once wrote a letter to a friend in which he said that M. Vincent had not long to live, and then, as was the custom, he gave the Saint the open letter. The invalid read it through, and, thinking his confrère had adopted this means of giving him a charitable warning to prepare for death, he sent for him and thanked him. He then said : 'I beg you to be kind enough to tell me the faults you have remarked in me,' and when the priest replied, with a blush, 'I have not noticed any,' Saint Vincent said: 'Do not be scandalised if I am doing nothing to show I am preparing for death; I have never gone to bed for the last eighteen years without placing myself in a state to appear before God before morning." He recommended the thought of death to others as a means of leading a good life, but he did not wish them to have it constantly before their minds; two or three times a day and then without dwelling too long on the idea was what he suggested, and this was his own practice.

Contrary to the way of many invalids. Saint Vincent did not seek, during his illnesses, for opportunities to flatter nature by pleasant remedies; there was nothing attractive about those he employed. He combated his maladies by purges, blood-lettings and sweatings. Even in the warmest weather, when a single blanket seems an excessively heavy weight, he used to sleep beneath three blankets, and between two large hot-water bottles. His body poured with perspiration, and after a sleepless night, he rose from his bed dripping and exhausted. During the day nature had her revenge, for, despite all his efforts, he could not remain awake; even when conversing with persons of high rank, his eves used to close and his head to nod. After an attack of illness, he was accustomed to leave Saint-Lazare and go for a breath of fresh air to Rougemont or Orsigny, where the house had farms, or to other places, paying

visits to the Confraternities of Charity or giving Missions.¹³ Saint Vincent's attendant was the brother-infirmarian of Saint-Lazare, Alexander Véronne, whose devotedness to his patient could not be excelled. There were others also who were concerned for his health : Saint Louise de Marillac, in the first place, who always had some infallible remedy or other to suggest, syrups, soups, tea, liquorice, ointments and special methods of purging and dressing wounds. Saint Vincent used to keep her informed of the results obtained, and if he became any better, charitably attributed it to her advice and remedies. The Duchess of Aiguillon, President of the Ladies of Charity, also intervened whenever she thought she could be of use. For instance, when she learned that Vincent de Paul, then seventy-two years old, had left Paris, in the middle of a very hot summer, to go and preach a mission at Sevran, she wrote to Father Portail to express her strong displeasure.¹⁴ During the last months of the Saint's life, when the gravity of his illness became generally known, his friends asked what could be done to cure him, or at least to prolong his davs. Nicholas Sevin, Bishop of Cahors, sent two hundred small pills:¹⁵ the Sovereign Pontiff dispensed him from the recitation of the Divine Office, 16 and Cardinals Durazzo, Bagni and Ludovisi begged him to listen to his physicians and confrères.¹⁷

Unfortunately, however, his recovery did not depend on himself; he was so utterly exhausted that the ablest physicians could not have cured him. Heaven was calling to him. Some of those who were especially dear to his heart died in the course of the year 1660; Father Portail on February 14; Saint Louise de Marillac on March 15, and Louis de Chandenier on May 21. The hope of seeing them once more added a further attraction to the thought of death; he had written to Saint Louise de Marillac, who was ill: 'You are going before me; I shall rejoin you soon.' This 'soon' was not long delayed, for his wishes

¹³ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, pp. 225, 237; Vol. III, p. 376; Vol. IV, pp. 530, 532; Vol. V, p. 362. ¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 587. ¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 388. ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 455. ¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 427, 455, 456. were realised in six or seven months. On July 16 he wrote to Turin : 'I am suffering a little from my poor legs, which will not allow me to rest by night or walk by day or even to stand upright ; apart from that, I am pretty well.'¹⁸

Notwithstanding the gradual weakening of his body, his mind retained all its lucidity, but he found it more difficult to apply it for any length of time. He continued to assemble his consultors for business concerned with the house and the Congregation, to read all letters that reached him and to reply to his correspondents. His discourses, for he still continued to deliver them for half an hour or more, had all their customary vigour and grace; his hearers even tell us that he never spoke with greater order and energy. He still received visitors; on July 2, Henri de Barillon, the future Bishop of Lucon, was presented by M. de Morangis. De Barillon tells us in his unpublished memoirs. when recounting the graces which he had received and which are set out side by side with his sins, that : 'On July 2, 1660, I assumed ecclesiastical dress, and on the same day M. de Morangis took me to see M. Vincent at Saint-Lazare, to receive his blessing. I was deeply edified by the virtue and humility of this holy priest.'¹⁹ On the following day, the ard, the first conference on the virtues of Saint Louise de Marillac (a conference which he had long desired to hold and which he kept putting off in the hope that he would be able to come downstairs) was held. When no hope remained of his being able to come down to the parlour, rather than lose an opportunity of glorifying his admirable collaborator, he decided to dispense with the rule forbidding women to enter the house. On July 3 and 24, the Sisters ascended to the floor on which he lived to confer with him about their Mother. They did so again on August 27, when an election of office-holders was held,²⁰ and about the same date, the Ladies of Charity received a similar authorisation for a meeting at which their final set of rules was elaborated.²¹ It became known out-

18 Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. VIII, p. 322.

19 Bibl. Nat. D. Fonteneau XIV f.l. 18,389, fº 286 vº.

²⁰ Letter from Sister Chétif to Sister Guérin (Arch. Nat. L. 1065, No. 17). ²¹ See above, Vol. I, p. 336.

side that all hope of his recovery had been abandoned; on August 12 a Visitation novice wrote: 'The nature of your illness has deprived me of the hope of ever seeing you again in this world.'²² The Duchess of Aiguillon frequently asked for information about him and expressed a strong desire to have him transferred to her palace where he would be better nursed than at Saint-Lazare.²³ Religious communities of women, especially the Carmelite and Visitation Orders, never ceased praying to God for his recovery.²⁴

In the beginning of September, things looked somewhat brighter; at first it was hoped he might live through the autumn and perhaps even to the end of the year. On September 2, Sister Mathurine Guérin wrote :25 'As far as his heart and mind are concerned, he is well; but as for his body, to tell you the truth, he can no longer rise from his chair without assistance and has to be carried about in a chair, even in his room. . . . We must be prepared for the will of our good God, for it is very unlikely that he can face this winter.' On the 14th, his legs again began to exude pus as thick as a man's finger, and on Saturday the 18th he was so weak that even he himself gave up the thought of receiving Holy Communion. This weakness led to an almost continual state of sleepiness, and at about midday of the 25th, he relapsed into his usual drowsiness. When he woke up and was asked what was the cause of it, he replied : 'The brother comes and is waiting for his sister.' The sister was close at hand. On Sunday 26th, he had himself taken to the chapel, heard Mass, or rather assisted at it, for sleep rendered attention impossible, and for the last time, he received the Bread of Life that fortifies and sustains. The effort he had made had exhausted his strength, and on his return to his room the drowsiness increased. The

²² Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 364.

²³ Letter of the Duchess of Aiguillon to Brother Ducournau (Archives of the provincial house of the Priests of the Mission, Turin.)

²⁴ Letter of Sister Martha of Jesus to Brother Ducournau (Turin Archives.)

²⁵ Arch. Nat. L. 1054, No. 17.

doctor was called and arrived after dinner; he ordered a gentle purge and said it was time to think of the last Sacraments. He gave the patient a severe shaking to rouse him from his lethargy; the Saint recognised him, assumed a pleasant, smiling expression, said a few words and immediately fell asleep. As soon as the doctor had gone, the door reopened and one of the chief officers of the house entered, knelt and asked for a blessing on all the members of the Company, absent and present. The dying man slowly raised his head and then with a smile on his lips began to pronounce the ritual blessing in a loud tone of voice which gradually faded away towards the close. At half-past six in the evening, the hour fixed for the administration of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, the room again filled up.

Father Dehorgny said :

'Sir, do wish to receive the last Sacraments?' 'Yes.'

'Do you believe all that the Church teaches?'

' I do.'

' Do you believe in the Unity and Trinity of God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost?'

'Yes.'

'Do you ask the forgiveness of all?'

'Nobody ever. . . .' The words died away on his lips; he had made an effort to pronounce distinctly, but had succeeded only in making two or three words intelligible. Those present were able to finish the sentence in their own minds: 'Nobody ever offended me.' After the acts of faith, hope, confidence, contrition, self-oblation and charity, Father Dehorgny continued:

'Sir, we are now about to say the Confiteor for you; please just strike your breast whilst saying mea culpa.' The voice of the dying man was raised in one last supreme effort and he was heard to recite this beautiful liturgical prayer with his brethren. He carefully followed the prayers prescribed for all the anointings, and at the end of each, said Amen in a very low tone. When all was over, his countenance reflected the joy of his soul and this joy gave him renewed strength. His eyes were fixed on the bystanders, whom he seemed to recognise.

'Your children implore your blessing,' said Father Dehorgny.

'It is not for me . . .'he began, but could get no further, for drowsiness cut short the sentence and his head fell forward on a towel which a lay-brother had placed under his chin.

Towards nine o'clock, Fathers Bécu, Grimal, Boucher and some of the older priests entered the room, and each of them suggested a prayer: *Paratum cor meum*; *Deus in adjutorium meum intende*; *Mater gratiæ, mater misericordiæ*; *Mater Dei, memento mei*; all of which he repeated with the docility of a child who is being taught a lesson. Father Dehorgny and Berthe asked him to bless his children, his friends and benefactors. He replied distinctly: 'May God bless you !' This was his last word of farewell to those who were present, and almost all withdrew. Fathers Gicquel and Berthe watched in turn beside the Saint; about every quarter of an hour and sometimes between the recitation of one *Miserere* and another, they suggested a short ejaculatory prayer.

About eleven o'clock it seemed as if death was imminent; large drops of sweat began to pour down his emaciated limbs; the pulse had almost ceased to beat, and his body was covered with a cold perspiration. The watchers grew alarmed; they sent for Father Dehorgny who arrived almost at once accompanied by Fathers Berthe, Boucher and Demonchy and the prayers for a departing soul were recited. Father Gicquel continued to utter brief prayers which the dying man at once repeated :

'Jesus.'

'Jesus.'

' Deus, in adjutorium meum intende.'

' Deus, in adjutorium meum intende.'

A little orange juice was placed on the lips of the dying Saint, but he kept his teeth tightly shut; a small spoonful of jelly then was placed between them but he did not swallow it. They next inserted a little cephalic powder in the nostrils to rouse him, and he sneezed; the state of drowsy sleepiness had been interrupted for a moment, and at once returned. ' Propitius esto,' said Father Dehorgny in a loud tone.

' Propitius esto,' he replied.

At a quarter past twelve, Brother Nicholas Survire cried aloud: 'Sir,' the Saint opened his eyes and looking peacefully at the Brother, he said: 'Well, Brother,' and then dozed off again. At one o'clock Father Maillard went to celebrate Mass, and when Saint Vincent was told this, he said: 'Thank you.' At half-past one Father Dehorgny again asked him to bless his spiritual family; the dying man raised his hand and again said: 'May God bless you! Qui capit opus bonum ipse perficiet.'

'Do you bless the conferences and the ecclesiastics who belong to them?'

'The Ladies of Charity?'

' Yes.'

'The Foundlings?'

' Yes.'

'The poor in the hospice of the Holy Name?'

'Yes.'

'All benefactors and friends?'

' Yes.'

A member of the Tuesday Conferences, then making a retreat at Saint-Lazare, asked permission to see the dying Saint. He was taken to his room and said :

'Sir, be good enough to give your blessing to the Gentlemen of the Conference which you founded; leave them your spirit and obtain for them from God that perseverance in virtue with which you have inspired them, and which you have communicated to them.'

'Qui capit opus bonum, ipse perficiet,' replied the Saint.

At two o'clock, there was a fresh alarm. He was perspiring freely and his countenance, hitherto rosy and luminous, now became as white as snow. Father Gicquel was exhausting the sick man by his frequent repetitions of the invocation : 'Deus, in adjutorium meum intende,' and the Saint said : 'That is quite enough.' A little later, the prayers began again :

' Credo in Deum Patrem.'

' Credo.'

^{&#}x27; Yes.'

' Credo in Jesum Christum.'

' Credo.'

' Credo in Spiritum Sanctum.'

' Credo.'

And so on. Each time the word 'Credo' was uttered, the crucifix was placed against his lips and he kissed it. After the acts of faith came those of hope and confidence in God.

' Spero.'

' Spero.'

' In te speravi.'

' Speravi.'

' Confido.'

' Confido,' he replied with the crucifix at his lips.

About half-past three, Father Berthe took Father Gicquel's place.

' In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.'

' Commendo.'

Shortly before four o'clock, his countenance again lost its rosy colour and assumed the paleness of a corpse. Death was at hand, and they prepared for its arrival by fresh invocations.

' Deus, in adjutorium meum intende.'

' Deus, in adjutorium meum intende.'

' Jesus.'

'Jesus,' he repeated, feebly moving his lips which afterwards remained open. About half-past four, the deathrattle in the throat began; a quarter of an hour later, the soul of the Saint appeared before his God. He died in his chair, close to the fire, fully dressed, and without a struggle. Death, far from disfiguring his features, seemed to have endowed him with a beauty and majesty that amazed all who were privileged to look upon his countenance.

When the prayers were over, all withdrew to allow Brothers Alexander Véronne, Dubourdieu, Lanier and Survire to prepare the body for burial, to vest and place it on the bed. During the whole of that day and the following night six clerics or priests, vested in surplices, recited the Office of the Dead in presence of the mortal remains of their venerated father. By morning, the whole of Paris had learned the sad news and visitors began to arrive in streams; great lords and ladies, Presidents of the Parliament, bishops, priests, members of religious Orders of men and women, and laymen of all conditions, filed by the bed on which the body lay.

Physicians carried out an autopsy and testified that all the chief organs were in perfect condition. It was observed that the spleen contained a bone as large as an ivory button, ²⁶ and this anomaly proved to be a source of considerable surprise. The heart, liver and intestines were removed, and the body placed in a double coffin of lead and of wood. A copper-plate bearing the following inscription was placed on the lead coffin : 'Vincent de Paul, priest, institutor or founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, died on September 27th of the year 1660, ²⁷ in about his 84th year.'

The funeral service began at ten o'clock in the morning of the 28th. The Church of Saint-Lazare was hardly able to contain the crowds which attended. Amongst those present were Coelio Piccolomini, the Papal Nuncio, the Prince of Conti, six bishops and abbots, the Duchess of Aiguillon and the Ladies of Charity, the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences, most of the parish clergy of Paris and representatives from the Hospice of the Holy Name and the Foundling Hospital.

The body was buried in a square, stone vault in the

²⁶ When Collet was a young man, he saw this bone. 'Many persons,' he wrote (*op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 46) have attributed this unusual production to the violence he employed in combating a severe and melancholy temperament which was his by nature.' Sister de Geoffre, of the secretariat of the Daughters of Charity, thought she had found this precious relic again. Shortly before her death, that is to say in 1893, she handed it over to Father Mailly, C.M. It was microscopically examined and analysed by some physicians who declared that it was simply a calcareous substance containing no trace of organic matter.

²⁷ ' Vincentius a Paulo, presbyter, fundator seu institutor et primus superior generalis Congregationis Missionis. Obiit die 27a septembris, anno Domini millesimo sexcentesimo sexagesimo, ætatis vero suæ circiter octogesimo quarto.' (Official report of the second exhumation on September 25, 1729.)

middle of the choir beneath the lectern.²⁸ The heart, liver and intestines were temporarily enclosed in a pewter vessel and buried in the nave beneath a flag-stone, at the middle of the balustrade, until the silver casket which the Duchess of Aiguillon had ordered was ready. The Duchess herself had decided on its shape and dimensions; a heart surmounted by gilt flames resting on four silver feet, thirtyfive centimetres high. The heart was placed in this reliquary some time afterwards, and the liver and portion of the intestines in a smaller and less precious casket; both caskets and their contents were placed in a press in the sacristy until the Beatification.

When the funeral service was over, and they were about to close the coffin for the last time and seal the tomb, the Archbishop of Vienna, M. de Montmorin, asked to be allowed to gaze once more on the features of a friend whom he had loved and to kiss the hands that had worked such mighty deeds of charity. The favour was granted.

On the day of the funeral and the following days, the tomb was visited by the faithful who came to weep and pray, as well as by numbers of sick and infirm attracted thither in the hope of obtaining a cure.

The members of the Tuesday Conferences of Paris wished to honour their illustrious founder by a solemn service in the parish church of the Court, Saint-Germainl'Auxerrois. The ceremony was deferred to November 23 in order to give Henri de Maupas du Tour, Bishop of Puy, time to prepare a funeral oration. The preacher took for his text: *Cujus laus est in Evangelio per omnes Ecclesias* from the second Epistle to the Corinthians. He spoke for two hours on the virtues of the departed, and the sermon contains some fine passages; however, it is the greatest

²⁸ The following inscription was placed on the tombstone that closed the entrace to the crypt. Hic jacet venerabilis vir Vincentius a Paulo, presbyter, fundator seu institutor et primus superior generalis Congregationis Missionis necnon Puellarum Charitatis. Obiit die vigesima septima septembris, anno millesimo sexcentesimo sexagesimo, ætatis vero suæ octogesimo quinto. Præfuit annis triginta quinque. (Official report of September 25, 1729.) The last four words may have been added after 1664 for Abelly does not give them. (Off. cit., Vol. I, Ch. LII, p. 259.) of pities that the determination to have a bishop to preach the funeral sermon has deprived us of Bossuet's magnificent oratory. The greatest hero of charity certainly deserved to have his praises proclaimed by the greatest of Christian orators.

Solemn services were also held in the metropolitan church of Reims, in many other cathedral and parochial churches, and in the chapels of several communities.

The Queen of Poland honoured the memory of him whom she revered as a saint by attending a solemn requiem service; her grief was intense, and his crucifix and portion of his rosary beads were sent to console her.

Messages of sympathy poured in from every direction. Queen Anne of Austria, the Prince of Conti, Father de Gondi, President de Lamoignon, the Marchese di Pianezze, Cardinal Ludovisi, the Bishops of Cahors, Montauban, Pamiers, Alet, Toulon, Narbonne, Boulogne, and others expressed their grief and esteem either by word or by letter. We shall give the words of one good priest, who sums up all that they said : 'I had the honour of knowing M. Vincent for the last thirty years. I have never seen anything in him that was not great and holy. I have always regarded him as an apostolic man, filled with the spirit of God, in a word, as a saint of our time in whom all virtues were combined in an eminent degree.'²⁹

The Church, after a long and patient enquiry, was one day to make this testimony her own.

²⁹ Collet, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 88.

CHAPTER LXVI

BEATIFICATION AND CANONISATION¹

HEN Benedict XIII, on August 13, 1729, solemnly enrolled Monsieur Vincent de Paul in the ranks of the Blessed, this official recognition of a sanctity that had manifested itself in such wonderful fashion, surprised nobody; in fact, it had long been anticipated.

In 1656 Henri de Maupas du Tour, Bishop of Evreux, considered himself happy inasmuch as he had made preparations for the canonisation of a Saint, Francis de Sales, and was acquainted with a man (he was referring to Vincent de Paul) who, he said, would one day be also canonised by the Church.

Loret, another contemporary, concludes some verses, written after the funeral service held on November 23, 1660, at the request of the members of the Tuesday Conferences, in the Church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, with the words :

> En vérité, si c'était moi Qui fus le Pontife de Rome, Je canoniserais cet homme.²

It may be said that Father Alméras, by assisting Abelly to write the life of Vincent de Paul, and by collecting the latter's writings and discourses, laid the foundations of the ensuing beatification. Father Jolly does not seem to have taken much trouble about arranging for the preliminary enquiry, and the credit of taking the first steps must be attributed to the General Assembly of 1697. When the

¹ This topic has been fully dealt with by M. Vandamme in his Le Corps de Saint Vincent de Paul, Abbeville, 1913, oct., pp. 9-66. ² La Muse historique, Paris, folio, November 27, 1660, p. 187. (In truth, were I the Roman Pontiff, I would canonise this man.) motion was submitted at the Assembly on August 18, it was adopted unanimously and with acclamation.

This desire was fully shared by the new Superior General. Father Pierron, who, in a circular letter dated October 27. 1697, appealed for the collaboration of all his confrères. 'I beg you,' he wrote, 'to make private enquiries, as if coming from yourself, and in a conversational manner, both from persons of our own Congregation and from Daughters of Charity in your neighbourhood, in case there are any, as well as from externs, of anything that would further our design, and to let me know of anything you may discover which would serve as a foundation. . . . We should proceed quietly and unostentatiously in all this affair.'3 Saint Vincent had now been dead thirty-seven years, and the ranks of those who had had the happiness of knowing him were growing thinner year by year. Amongst the survivors there were only seven or eight bishops who could sav that they had known him : Bossuet of Meaux, William de la Brunetière of Saintes, Tristan de la Baumède-Suze of Auch, Francis de Nesmond of Bayeux, Sebastian de Quémadeuc of Saint-Malo, Victor Augustus Méliand, who had resigned the see of Alet and Francis de Laval, who had resigned that of Quebec. These prelates informed Father Pierron that they were quite prepared to bear witness to his sanctity. Mgr Bottini, Promoter of the Faith, was interested in the cause, and advised them not to delay any longer for, as he said : 'One direct witness is better than ten indirect.'⁴ Father Pierron died before the cause had passed through the preliminary stages, and it was his successor, Father Wattel, who saw the beginnings of the Process instituted by the Ordinary. Father de Cès, Priest of the Mission, was appointed Postulator, one of the Vicars General of Paris, Francis Vivant, President of the Court, and two doctors of theology, assessors.

The first meeting was held on January 5, 1705, in presence of Cardinal de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris. The first witnesses were sworn in on February 10, and the two

³ Recueil des principales circulaires des supérieurs généraux de la Congrégation de la Mission, Vol. I, p. 216.

⁴ Ms. testimony (Arch. de la Mission).

hundred and ninety-nine who were called included forty Priests of the Mission, forty-nine Daughters of Charity, sixteen Visitation Nuns, one Lady of Charity and representatives of the Communities that had been assisted by Saint Vincent : the Daughters of Providence, of the Cross, of Christian Union, and of Saint Agnes of Arras ; a young man who had been brought up at the Foundling Hospital, four physicians, thirteen farmers and labourers and a few others chosen for the most part from the ranks of the clergy and from religious Communities of women.

In order to avoid a fatiguing journey to Paris in the case of witnesses who lived in the environs of the city or in the country, most of whom were old and infirm, an ecclesiastical judge, John Genest, a doctor of theology and commendatary abbot, accompanied by a notary, were sent to take evidence. Genest left Paris on June 16 and went straight to Valpuiseaux; when he had finished there he continued his journey through the diocese of Chartres, calling at Villars, Étampes and Chartres. He returned to Paris on July 5 and set out again on August 14 for the dioceses of Arras, Verdun, Laon, Soissons and Meaux, not returning until The indefatigable Judge again took up his November 8. pilgrim's staff but confined himself on this occasion to the diocese of Paris, visiting Lagny, Palaiseau, Juvisy, Asnières, Villeneuve-le-Garenne, Gennevilliers, Clichy and then back to Lagny where he concluded his task on January 16, 1706. When these commissions of enquiry were over, similar ones were instituted by the Ordinaries of the dioceses of Toul. Metz, Rennes, Sarlat, Alet, Angers, Avignon, Boulogne, Lyons, Bayeux, Verdun, Lescar, Saint-Flour, Meaux, Dax, Montauban, Cahors, Poitiers, Clermont, Autun, Nancy, Blois, Troyes, Châlons and Reims.

Claude de la Salle, Priest of the Mission, was the first witness to be heard on February 20, 1705. The fullest, most solid and best documented evidence was given by a lay-brother, Peter Chollier, Father Pierron's secretary and archivist of the Congregation. We should like to give a few of the names of the most remarkable witnesses ; in the first place, five Presidents of the Paris Parliament : Louis Fontaine, Gaspard de Langluse, John Izally, Christian Francis de Lamoignon and Claude Pelletier, formerly minister of State; Peter Daullier, Secretary and Councillor of the King; Francis Joysel, doctor of theology, who played an important part in the condemnation of the Five Propositions, Claude de Rochechouart de Chandenier, Abbé de Moutiers-Saint-Jean, John Bonnet, afterwards Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, Nicholas Gobillon, Vicar General of Paris and parish priest of Saint Lawrence, John Masson, parish priest of Clichy, Joan Ann de Croze, Superioress of the Seminary of Christian Union and Emmanuel Langlois, a Parisian book-seller.

The enquiry held at Verdun was fuller than those in other provincial cities. Convents of nuns that had been so charitably assisted by Saint Vincent during the famine which had raged in Lorraine, contributed large quotas of witnesses; four Carmelites, seven Poor Clares and five Benedictine Nuns of the Congregation of Saint-Maur were summoned. There were only two witnesses from religious Orders of men, one Jesuit and one Capuchin Father.

All the witnesses had not been heard before another stage was begun-the process de non-cultu-which is intended to prove by fresh depositions and the inspection of relics and places, that the honours paid to the Servant of God have not transgressed the limits authorised by the Church for those not yet officially beatified. The eleven witnesses summoned were persons well acquainted with the house and church of Saint-Lazare : James Charles Brisacier, Superior of the Seminary for Foreign Missions, Francis Lechassier, Superior of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, the parish priests of Saint-Jean-en-Grève, of Saint-Louis-en-l'Ile and some Parisian canons. The official reports of the visits which were then made to the church of Saint-Lazare, the sacristy and its annexes, and Saint Vincent's own room are full of interesting information. The members of the tribunal inspected the tomb-stone, placed in the middle of the choir, and then, in a room above the sacristy, the heart-shaped silver reliquary containing the actual heart of the great benefactor of the poor. The treasures of Saint Vincent's room were next displayed : a hat and a biretta both covered with paper, a leaden holy-water stoup, instruments of penance : a hairshirt, hair-cloths, girdles and cords, three pairs of rosarybeads, a walking-stick (shortly afterwards presented to the Duke of Tuscany), old shoes, sandals, linen bed-curtains, black clothes, white shirts, body linen, a Horæ diurnæ, a breviary and the two sponges which the brothers had used to wash the body after death. The organs which had been removed with the heart, were also preserved, some in a casket, others in a crystal vase. Other souvenirs, doubtless of less value but still precious, were kept in the same place. There was no doubt that it was Saint Vincent's own room, for he could be seen depicted everywhere ; there were two portraits of him hanging on the walls, one measuring two feet in height and the other one foot, and there were seventeen other representations of him beautifully carved in high relief. Another work of art, also in high relief, attracted the visitors' attention ; the Father and the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove were represented at the top; lower down, the Holy Family ; still lower, Saint Vincent himself, and underneath his portrait, the following prayer : Oremus. Excita, quæsumus, Domine, in Congregatione Missionis spiritum cui famulus tuus Vincentius a Paulo servivit : ut nos, eodem repleti, studeamus amare quod amavit et opere exercere quod docuit. Per Christum Dominum. Nostrum. (Let us pray. Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that the Congregation of the Mission may be animated with the spirit of Thy servant Vincent de Paul, so that, replete with the same spirit, we may strive to love what he loved and practise what he taught. Through Christ our Lord.) His countenance was also depicted in two frontispieces to theses dedicated to his memory, one of which had been defended in the Sorbonne on February 8, 1664 by Denis Charon, and the other, in 1666, in the Jesuit house at Cahors. Pen portraits were also to be seen there in the four lives of the Saint which had been written in French, Italian, Spanish and Polish.

After a careful examination, Cardinal de Noailles declared, in his official report, that no breach of the canonical regulations regarding religious worship had been observed.⁵

Another formality was essential before the Cause could be brought forward in Rome : postulatory letters. The

⁵ Processus de non-cultu (Arch. de la Mission), f^o 107-114. VOL. 111.-2 D

Beatification of a Servant of God should be in response to a collective appeal, which the Church demands because She does not wish to examine a Cause until informed by a number of eminent personages, especially bishops, that the particular Cause is worthy of attention. The postular had no difficulty in procuring the letters he needed. The official collection published at Rome in 1709 contains seventy-two⁶; they are all signed by persons of eminence, both laymen and ecclesiastics: the King of France, the King (James III) and Queen of England, the Duke of Lorraine, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Republic of Genoa, the General Assembly of the Clergy of France, the Provost of the Merchants and Sheriffs of Paris, the Chapters of the Metropolitan Church and of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, eight Cardinals, thirty-three French bishops (including Fénelon and Bossuet), six Italian, two Spanish and one Irish bishop, the Superiors General of the Benedictines of Saint-Maur, of the Dominicans, Minims, Carmelites, Christian Doctrine. Oratorians, Premonstratensians, Canons of Sainte-Geneviève, Antonines of Dauphiné, the Vicar General of the Order of Mercy, the Provincial of the Capuchins of the province of Paris, the Abbot of Grandmont and the Superior of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice.

Though the number of postulatory letters is large, yet one is surprised that it is not larger; there are only thirtythree signatures of French bishops, at a time when France had one hundred and twenty-eight episcopal sees. Some abstentions may be explained on the score of the Jansenist tendencies of certain members of the hierarchy; others, perhaps in larger number, because those bishops who had taken part in the General Assembly of 1705 may have thought the collective petition made by the Assembly dispensed them from sending in special letters of their own. Moreover, we know that all the letters were not published; one would seek in vain for those of the King of Spain and the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, which are nevertheless referred to by Father Wattel in his circular letter of

⁶ Epistolæ ad SS. D. N. Clementem, Papam, XI, pro promovenda Beatificatione et canonizatione V. Servi Dei Vincentii a Paulo, Romæ, 1709.

February 9, 1708.⁷ Is the silence of the Superior General of the Society of Foreign Missions and of the General of the Jesuits to be explained by such omission or by abstention?

On August 14, 1706, when all the preliminary formalities had been carried out, Father de Cès took an oath in presence of Cardinal de Noailles that he would faithfully carry to Rome a copy of the evidence specially prepared for the Sacred Congregation of Rites. In the following year he was appointed superior of Sedan; his place was taken by Father Couty who left Paris early in 1708 and arrived in Rome, after a number of delays, on May 24, the Octave of the Ascension.⁸

On the following Sunday, the Feast of Pentecost, Clement XI granted him an audience and graciously dispensed him from a recent decree which required an interval of ten years from the day on which the process of the Ordinary was entrusted to the Sacred Congregation of Rites to the day on which it might be begun. Nevertheless, although the evidence was deposited with Inghirami, the Secretary of Rites, on May 30, 1708, it remained unopened for more than nine months, owing to the death of the Registrar and political circumstances which deferred the nomination of his successor, for the troops of the Imperial claimant to the throne of Spain had invaded the Papal States. Father Couty made the best use he could of this enforced leisure ; he saw Clement XI again on June 10, and presented him with eight postulatory letters from a number of bishops. On July 8, Cardinal de la Trémoille, the French Deputy Ambassador, who had been appointed, on the 14th, Cardinal ponente or official reporter of the Cause, handed Louis XIV's letter to the Pope. On the 22nd, Father Couty had a third audience and presented His Holiness with more than fifty postulatory letters in a silver-gilt dish. 'What !' cried the Pope delighted, 'a dish full of letters ! I shall return them

⁷ Recueil des principales circulaires, Vol. I, p. 244.

⁸ There is a ms. written by Father Couty entitled : Relation de ce que j'ay fait pour la Béatification et la Canonization du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul (Arch. de la Mission). The ms. tops at July 8, 1713 and has been utilised in this chapter.

to you as soon as I have read them so that you may have them copied and printed.'

The bundle of documents was at length opened on March 9, 1709; the translation, revision and production of two copies of the four thousand pages of the Ordinary's process took up the months of March, April and May. June and three weeks of July were devoted to the preparation of an analysis, a summary and a report on the validity of the process.

The Promoter of the Faith, after studying the evidence, brought forward his objections which were of two kinds; the first dealt with the evidence submitted, and the second with its form.

The most weighty objection raised by the evidence submitted was Vincent de Paul's relations with the Abbé de Saint-Cyran as set forth in an anonymous pamphlet entitled : Defence of the late M. Vincent de Paul . . . against the false statements in the book of his life written by M. Abelly. This little book, alluded to by one of the witnesses, Anthony Durand. Priest of the Mission, had attracted the attention of the Promoter of the Faith, Prosper Lambertini, the future Pope Benedict XIV. He found excellent materials for his purpose in the pamphlet and he made good use of them. Vincent de Paul and Saint-Cyran, said the writer of the booklet, were close friends; they had rendered each other services, and if Vincent had gained the lawsuit for the possession of Saint-Lazare and obtained the approbation of his Congregation from Rome, it was due to Saint-Cyran. The gratitude of Vincent de Paul was manifested when Richelieu's heavy hand fell on the unfortunate Abbé; he had not denounced Saint-Cyran's errors, even when officially interrogated, but on the contrary, had concealed them, and he had also told the Abbé how to reply to the Judge without compromising himself. When Saint-Cyran had been released from prison, Vincent had visited, sympathised with and congratulated him. As soon as he heard of the Abbé's death, he had gone to the dead man's house, sprinkled the corpse with holy water, and he subsequently arranged that the Abbey of Saint-Cyran should be granted to his nephew.

Father Couty had no difficulty in proving that Saint Vincent had endeavoured to bring his friend back to a better way of thinking and had combated Jansenist doctrines the whole course of his life. He added that the pamphlet referred to was worthless; it was anonymous, Jansenist and tendentious in tone, written, as it was known, by Barcos, Saint-Cyran's nephew, and full of errors that could easily be disproved.

It was a skilful rejoinder, and the pro-promoter had nothing to say in reply. Nevertheless, it is quite certain that Barcos had not been mistaken about the matters to which Prosper Lambertini had referred. Saint Vincent and the Abbé de Saint-Cyran had lived together as friends, but before the latter had revealed his new doctrines. It is also true that when Saint Vincent was under examination. he had striven not to compromise Saint-Cyran in order to prevent a sentence of death being passed upon him, and it is true, furthermore, that he did go and sprinkle holy water on the corpse when he heard of the death of Saint-Cyran. What harm was there in that? Janzenism as a heresy had not yet come into existence, for it was not condemned by Rome until some years later, and the duties of charity, gratitude and even ordinary good manners obliged Vincent de Paul not to dip his hands in the blood of an old friend. Father Couty's reply, then, was not accurate, though there can be no question of his good faith. If the pro-promoter had noticed these points, the postulator might easily have taken up fresh ground and issued victorious from the fray. The discussion on the validity of the Ordinary's process did not work out so well for Father Couty, who had regretfully to abandon thirty minor processes which were deficient in some one or other of the formalities prescribed by Canon Law. He was successful on September 6 in eight processes dealing with the virtues, and on October 5, in the process that went to show that no worship had been paid to Vincent de Paul.

The time had now come to set about the process in genere. This process, of secondary importance, is intended to show that the reputation of the Servant of God for sanctity has

not diminished since the Ordinary's process was held. Father Couty had hoped to avoid this stage, although a dispensation from the process is never given when a Cause of a confessor is in question, but in this he was disappointed. Remissorial letters were delivered on October 5 nominating Cardinal de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris; Artus de Lionne, Bishop of Rosalie, and Humbert Ancelin, formerly Bishop of Tulle, to act as members of the tribunal, exacting the presence of at least two of them at each session, and supplying a list of sixteen points to which each of the witnesses should furnish replies. Father Couty was in Paris on December 14. and on the 31st, the Judges held their first meeting. There was some delay about the second meeting because the authorisation of Parliament was required before the remissorial letters could be utilised, and that body, before giving its consent, wished to make certain that the Roman document contained nothing contrary to the liberties of the Gallican Church. It gave its decision on January 22, 1710, and then the fourteen witnesses summoned were free to give their evidence in due order; ten for the postulator, and four for the sub-promoter. The Court heard amongst others Cardinal d'Estrées, Francis Bochard de Saron, Bishop of Clermont, Nicholas Boutillier, the Principal of Beauvais College, John Baptist Chevalier, Councillor and sub-dean of the great Chamber of Parliament, and Peter Saulier, Secretary to the King. All were agreed that the beatification would displease only the Jansenists. This process was taken to Rome by Chevalier Chappe, and its validity recognised in December.

By January 7, 1710, Rome had already signed further remissorial letters allowing the three judges to begin, within three months, the process *in specie ne pereant probationes*, so called because its object is to collect, as soon as possible, detailed depositions of old and sickly people who might die before the real apostolic process *in specie* is begun. The six months were reckoned from the day indicated by the date of the letters, but as they were only opened in April they had only three months to run. As this period was obviously insufficient, Father Couty petitioned and was granted an extension of six months. Sixty-one witnesses,



MIRACLES WROUGHT THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF S. VINCENT (From an XVIIIth Century Engraving).

to the points indicated and the questions set down.

We have now reached the year 1711. On March 12, the Sacred Congregation of Rites granted remissorial and compulsorial letters with the object of obtaining information within a year as to the holiness of life, the virtues and the miracles in specie of the Servant of God. This process was begun at Paris on May 28. Fifty-four of the witnesses who had been heard at the Ordinary's process were now dead ; the others, for the most part, had appeared before the process in specie ne pereant probationes and almost all those summoned to attend the new process appeared to give evidence in regard to miracles. When the evidence had been taken, the tribunal examined some letters of Vincent de Paul, other documents submitted by Brother Chollier, the depositions made at the Ordinary's process by the fifty-four deceased witnesses, and the common rules of the Congregation of the Mission. The Congregation of Rites also required an examination of the body of Vincent de Paul and of all its separate parts, in whatsoever places in the diocese of Paris they might be, and gave orders that the entire body should be restored to the state in which it had originally been found, that none but essential witnesses should be present at the examination, and that the most absolute secrecy should be observed as to what had been discovered until the process was complete. An excommunication late sententie was laid on anyone whomsoever who would dare to add to or take away from what was found in the tomb.

The inspection of the tomb, originally fixed for February 12, 1712, was delayed on account of the death of the Dauphiness, the Duchess of Burgundy, and took place on the 19th in presence of Cardinal de Noailles, the former Bishop of Tulle, two sub-promoters of the faith, two medical doctors, Fathers Bonnet, Couty and Pellegrino de Negri (the Visitor of the Roman province), three lay-brothers who were needed for the manual labour, and nine official witnesses. The coffin was placed on a raised platform, and the hearts of all present beat anxiously to know if God had preserved from corruption the body that had lain

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

concealed from men's eyes for half a century. The coffin was opened and all eagerly bent forward to see its contents. The following account was given by Father Dusaray, the Procurator General, who was present : 'I had the consolation of seeing his body which was complete ; the limbs were intact and united together and gave forth no unpleasant odour. There were eighteen teeth; the nine in the upper, and the nine in the lower jaw, which were there when he died. The arms, hands and fingers are visible in flesh and bone, with the exception of the tips of the fingers of the left hand which are slightly fleshless. His legs are entire and apparently the feet also, but they were not visible, for the stockings were not removed. The cassock with its collar and four buttons are almost as if they had only just been put on, and I myself, with some others, who wished to remove a small portion of it were not able to do so. Furtherfore, just at this moment, the Papal Brief was read forbidding anything to be removed on these occasions. The physician and surgeon who were present declared that there .vas no natural explanation of the state in which the body was found after an interval of fifty-one years.'9 Father Dusaray was mistaken on one point; there were nineteen teeth, nine above and ten below, as we learn from the official report that was issued after the Beatification. In another letter, he goes on to say : 'Only the eyes and nose had wasted away. . . . As they were unwilling to remove the remains from the coffin, lest the bones might be dislocated, and as the cassock was not touched, all those parts of the body, which still seemed to be flesh and bone, were not clearly visible. They raised only one lip of the incision made in the stomach, which had been opened when the heart and intestines were removed, and those who drew near the body and have better sight than mine, assure me that they saw the liver still quite rosy coloured. As for myself, I touched his arm and right hand, which is still flesh and bone, but fleshless with the finger-nails. It is absolutely certain that worms were never in his coffin, for the cassock seemed to be fresh and smooth but odourless, and was as good as when he had been placed in the lead

⁹ Vies des saints prêtres (Saint-Sulpice ms.), p. 113.

coffin.'¹⁰ 'The clothes,' says another eyewitness, 'look as if they had just come from a shop'; and Cardinal de Noailles who fingered the cassock said with a smile : 'It is of excellent material.'¹¹

All was over by March 31, 1712, and on July 21 Father Couty arrived in Rome with the official report; he was granted an audience with the Pope on the 26th and presented His Holiness with two letters, one from the General Assembly of the Clergy of France, and the other from the Ladies of Charity, who also sent a beautiful goldembroidered stole which was worn by Clement XI on great ceremonial occasions. The Ladies received a plenary indulgence in perpetuity, and the Brief that conveyed it was richly framed and exhibited in the room where they held their meetings. On the same day Father Couty handed Cardinal de la Trémoille two letters from the King of France in support of the Cause, one for himself and the other for the Pope; he also saw Cardinal Ottoboni, Protector of France, to whom the King had also written.

On August 27, 1712, the Pope gave permission for the process to begin, and the task of translating and copying the documents was immediately begun. On July 1, 1713, the Sacred Congregation, after an attentive examination, declared that the apostolic process was valid.

This decision had been expected. Six months previously, Father Bonnet, in his New Year circular letter, had written to his confrères : 'I requested Father Couty on his departure to let us know, as soon as he had reached Rome and made enquiries, about how long this process might last, and he at once informed me that, in the usual course of events, it would certainly last five or six years. Since then he wrote to say that there is reason to hope matters may move more quickly because, when the process was examined, it became evident that the great works of the Servant of God, his heroic virtues and miracles are more than proved by the authentic evidence demanded by the rules of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, so that this will be one of the best

¹⁰ Histoire générale de la Congrégation de la Mission, par Lacour, dans les Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission, t. LXVII, 1902, p. 283. ¹¹ Collet, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 546, note. Causes that has been brought before the tribunal for a very long time; and in addition he says that Our Holy Father the Pope and their Eminences the Cardinals are filled with admiration and esteem for this great Servant of God.¹²

On April 21, 1714, the Sacred Congregation declared, after examining the 376 letters of the Servant of God and the rules for the Priests of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity and the Confraternities of Charity, that they contained nothing calculated to hinder the pursuit of the process.

Months went by before the principal question came up for discussion, namely : ' Had the Servant of God practised the theological as well as the moral virtues in an heroic degree?' Father Couty, unused to inaction, began to grow weary, and the Superior General would have yielded to his wishes, by recalling him to Paris and releasing him from his post of postulator, were it not that the successful prosecution of the Cause took precedence of everything else. On September 8, 1714, Father Bonnet wrote to him :18 'Knowing this whole affair as perfectly as you do, you are quite prepared to answer the objections that may be put forward from time to time,' adding as another motive : 'The successful result of this affair greatly depends on the goodwill of the Judges and of the Sovereign Pontiff, all of whom are fond of you, listen to what you say and gladly assist you.' Father Bonnet was quite right ; if the redoubtable 'devil's advocate' was to be vanquished, a postulator was needed who was fully acquainted with the whole business, and no one was so well equipped for the fray as Father Couty.

The decree on the heroic nature of the virtues always presupposes three Congregations known as ante-preparatory, preparatory and general. The first is held at the palace of the Cardinal *ponente* in presence of consultors and masters of ceremonies; the second, in the Apostolic Palace, before the same officials and all the Cardinals, and the third, in the presence of the Pope.

On January 22, 1715, when the ante-preparatory Con-

12 Recueil des principales circulaires, t. I, p. 277.
13 Arch. de la Mission (copy).

gregation was held, Prosper Lambertini deployed all the resources of his brilliant dialectical skill against the Cause. Vincent de Paul's writings were again referred to; further enquiries were called for, and every latitude was given to the Cardinal *ponente* in the choice of examiners. This last decision banished every illusion of Father Bonnet's as to a rapid conclusion of the process. On March 10, 1715, he wrote to Father Couty, who had informed him of the state of affairs:

'I have discovered a collection of documents compiled from memoirs composed by some Missionaries, both clerics and lay-brothers, who report what they say they heard our Venerable Vincent utter in his public conferences, and it is also stated, in the beginning of this collection, that it contains some fragments that were taken from M. Vincent's manuscripts. An examination of this collection, which is between four and five inches thick, would dismay the most indefatigable commissary. And after all his pains, what would he derive from it? Are we not within our right if we say, in case anything disadvantageous to the Cause is discovered in the collection, that these persons did not fully understand his ideas or accurately remember the words of the Servant of God? And if there is anything favourable, cannot the devil's advocate say that it is by no means certain that it was he who said it? And how could we prove it? Moreover, if we are asked for such collections of documents and are obliged to present them, why should we not also be obliged to give those of the Daughters of Charity, which are contained in similar or even larger volumes? Lastly, who can swear that these are the extracts referred to in the life of M. Vincent? We know nobody competent to do so.'

'2nd. From your letter of February 11 it seems superfluous to go to Saint-Denis and procure a copy of the collection (of conferences) given there to the Visitation Nuns, because you say the commissary will pay them an official visit and demand it. However, I will try to procure one, but it is the commissary's duty to ask the Mother Superior for a declaration that she knows of no other collection.' '3rd. I have just written to-day to procure, if possible, the book that was written and printed for the Daughters of Charity who used to go to the Hôtel-Dieu, but why ask for that rather than for the six others composed for the Daughters of Charity, which are also mentioned in the ninth book of the Life of the Servant of God?'¹⁴

Abbé Vivant, Chancellor of the University of Paris, was deputed to procure and examine the writings.

Father Bonnet wrote again :¹⁵ 'We will hand him over the Collections in our possession, which comprise 800 folio pages, our rules for the seminary, comprising the two sets of regulations drawn up by M. Vincent for the Missions, and a declaration made by the Mother Superior and the officers of the Daughters of Mary of Saint-Denis, who declare that they have no formal collection of conferences but only an abridged collection of brief little admonitions which he gave during visitations, whenever the faults he had observed provided him with material for doing so. Now, they are not disposed to communicate this collection of their little faults, and we shall see what the Chancellor has to say to that.

'As for the fifth item, namely, the small booklet composed for the ladies who went to supply the collation to the sick, we had been unable to discover a copy here, or even to procure a copy from anywhere else.'

Whilst the theologians were still conducting their enquiries into the orthodoxy of the Servant of God, the postulators and advocates of the Cause were drawing up their replies to the devil's advocate.

Time was passing, and in Paris people began to grow impatient. On October 22, 1715, the Assembly of the Clergy of France constituted itself the mouthpiece of all in a letter to the Pope :

'Most Holy Father, Once again and for the third time we convey to Your Holiness the earnest prayers of the clergy and the most ardent desires of the whole of France, confident that You will not disapprove of this zeal, which has sprung, at one and the same time, from a motive of the glory of God and the welfare of the people confided to our

¹⁴ Arch. de la Mission (copy). ¹⁵ Ibid.

Nay more, even though it may not escape some care. suspicion of importunity, it cannot be displeasing to the Vicar of Christ, who knows that Christ Himself did not grant anything save to those who asked Him with importunity, and that He opens willingly to those who knock repeatedly. Hence, that which we so earnestly begged of Your Holiness at the two last assemblies of the Clergy of France, namely: that You would deign to inscribe in the catalogue of saints the name of Vincent de Paul, institutor and founder of the Congregation of the Mission, a man who has deserved so well of religion and the Church, we now venture to demand to-day and with all the greater ardour, inasmuch as the long and severe examination of his most innocent and most holy life furnishes the most illustrious and unambiguous proofs of all his virtues.' After a brief exposition of the virtues and labours of the Servant of God, the letter proceeds : 'Such, Most Holy Father, are the grave motives which plead on behalf of this man, so well deserving of the honours we render to those who are counted amongst the children of God, and whose heritage is amongst the saints. As all these facts, which are widely known throughout the whole of France, have already won for the founder of the Congregation of the Mission a reputation for sanctity, we only await your decision to give him the title of saint, and to render him religious worship. May the Clergy of France be permitted to promise themselves this favour from Your Holiness who by recently crushing error has already procured a great honour for religion.'16

This letter proved of no effect, for the process went on with the usual slowness. Theologians examined the writings despatched from Paris, namely, some extracts taken from discourses, the rules of the 'internal seminary,' those of the missions, and the accounts and official reports of the canonical visitations held in the Convent of the Visitation Nuns at Saint-Denis. After a favourable report, the Congregation decided, on June 12, 1717, that there was nothing in the writings that constituted a hindrance to the progress of the Cause.

¹⁶ Collection des procès-verbaux des Assemblées Générales du Clergé de France, Paris, 1774, t. VI, p. 1478, et pièces justificatives, p. 530.

The great debate was due to take place in the preparatory Congregation held on December 18, 1717. Prosper Lambertini again proved a redoubtable opponent. Vincent de Paul appeared in a very sinister light when he had finished The formidable promoter of the with his accusations. faith recalled the experiments in alchemy carried out in Barbary, experiments, as he said, that were forbidden, because alchemy is a diabolical science; the friendly relations with the Abbé de Saint-Cyran; the dispute with the Benedictines of Saint-Méen, a dispute characterised by tragic incidents that developed into a scandal; the carelessness shown by the parish priest of Clichy and of Châtillon in leaving his flocks after a few months' residence amongst them. According to Lambertini, one would imagine that the Servant of God had sent his priests to Madagascar on his own initiative, had himself been ordained sub-deacon and deacon in the same year without any dispensation from Rome, did not believe in the infallibility of the Pope, and had not received Holy Viaticum on his death-bed.

The promoter, fortunately, was only acquainted with the life of Vincent de Paul from Abelly's biography, and the statements of witnesses. If he had only known that the Servant of God was not fully twenty years old when ordained priest, that he remained parish priest of Clichy when he went to live with the de Gondis and took possession of the cure at Châtillon, that he had accepted a priory in the diocese of Langre, a canon's stall with the obligation of residence at Écouis in Normandy at the very time when his parishioners at Clichy still had claims on him; if, we repeat, the promoter had been aware of all these facts, he would not have failed to make a new series of onslaughts, and the postulator's task would have been rendered even more difficult.

There is a story to the effect that Vincent de Paul used to take snuff, and that the promoter had cleverly seized on this act of immortification to ruin the Cause, but that the postulator was lucky enough to discover a doctor's prescription to take snuff for motives of health, and that Prosper Lambertini, when confronted with the document, withdrew his objection. It is a pure piece of fiction, for we have full

information of all the difficulties raised by the devil's advocate, because they have been published, and this objection is nowhere mentioned.

Father Couty demolished each of the promoter's objections so efficiently that the heroic nature of the virtues was admitted; two consultors, however, asked for fuller information in regard to the dispute at Saint-Méen and the fair of Saint-Lawrence, which was within the jurisdiction of the Priory of Saint-Lazare, and the documents for which they asked were subsequently communicated to them.

It seemed as if there would be no delay about the general Congregation, and yet it was not held for ten years. Jansenism was at that time working havoc in the ranks of the French Clergy; Cardinal de Noailles was in favour of the party, and even Father Bonnet himself, a victim of calumnies, was regarded in high places as not having acted with sufficient vigour against the partisans of the new ideas. In these circumstances, one can easily understand that Rome had no wish to please either the Archbishop of Paris or the Superior General of the Congregation. Father Couty suffered more than anyone else from these delays. He made up his mind to return to Paris and to supply the Cardinal with an explanation of the Bull Unigenitus, which gave perfect liberty to all Thomists to remain Thomists; it is even very likely that he received an official mission from the Pope for that purpose, for His Holiness supplied him with a thousand crowns for the journey.

Success crowned his efforts. Unfortunately, difficulties of another kind arose : the Cardinal *ponente* died, and so too did Clement XI on March 19, 1721 ; the pontificate of Innocent XIII was very brief, and Benedict XIII, elected in 1724, was in favour of giving precedence to Causes of Canonisation over Causes of Beatification. When Father Couty had returned to Rome, after his journey in 1720, he found that he had to go back to Paris to take part in the General Assembly of August 1, 1724, since he was bound to be present in virtue of his office as Assistant to the Superior General. He left his confrère, William Vieillescases, behind him in Rome to act as postulator in his absence. The office of Cardinal *ponente*, rendered vacant by the death of Cardinal de la Trémoille and then by that of Cardinal Paulucci, was filled in 1726 by Cardinal de Polignac. It was soon clear that the Cause was in good hands; at the request of the new Cardinal *ponente*, the King and Queen of France each sent a letter to Rome, on December 8 and December 16, urging His Holiness to hasten the proceedings. Eight months passed before the general Congregation met and then, after five hours' deliberation, on September 16, 1727, the members unanimously declared in favour of the heroic nature of the virtues of the Servant of God.

Benedict XIII ordered the decree to be published on the 22nd.

The most difficult stage was now over, but still the end of the journey had not been reached. Mortal men had been consulted, had borne witness, and all of them had proclaimed the holiness of Vincent de Paul. Another testimony remained to be studied, that of God Himself; it had been stated that He too had borne witness to the heroic virtue of His servant by working miracles. Rome was now to examine the truth of these statements.

In every Cause of Beatification that is based solely on tradition and documents, four miracles are, in principle, required, but in case of founders of Orders or religious communities, if three are established, the Church dispenses with the fourth.

Vincent de Paul, however, was in no need of this concession. A selection was made of the twenty-one miracles that had been put forward, only eight of which were retained for discussion; these were eight instantaneous cures: Claude Joseph Compoin, ten years old, of blindness; Mary Anne Lhuillier, eight years old, of dumbness and paralysis from birth; Anthony Greffier, an infant of some months, of epilepsy, deafness and blindness; Geneviève Catherine Marquette, four years old, of paralysis from birth; Sister Mathurine Guérin, Daughter of Charity, formerly a Sister Superior, of a cancerous ulcer in the leg; James Grou, thirty-nine years old, of hæmorrhage; Michael Lepiné, forty years old, of ulcer of the liver; and Alexander Philip Le Grand, four years old, of paralysis.

The ante-preparatory Congregation on the miracles was

held on February 1, 1729. Some days later Father Vieillescases had an audience of Pope Benedict XIII of which he has left the following account : 'First of all, His Holiness asked me what should be done for our Cause. I told His Holiness that our lot was in his hands, and that I had come to give him an account of how the antepreparatory Congregation had passed off. "I know all about that; I know all about that," he replied. I then beg Your Holiness to give official notice to the preparatory Congregation to meet on the fifth of April next, the feast of Saint Vincent Ferrer, so that we may be able, in the meantime, to reply to the objections raised by Mgr the Promoter .-- "I shall not be at it," said His Holiness. "But that does not matter, Holy Father," said I, "because it is not necessary for Your Holiness to be present at this preparatory Congregation."-" No, that's true," said the good, kind Pope, and, without any further ceremony, he wrote proprio pugno on the label of my petition : " Promoter of the Faith, call a meeting of the preparatory Congregation for the eleventh of April next." I had the honour of conveying the rescript of His Holiness to Mgr de Polignac, and His Eminence sent it to Mgr Cavalchini. But as I was afraid it would not be carried out, I begged His Eminence to remind His Holiness of it on February 15 at the general Congregation on the miracles of the Venerable Martyr, Fidelis of Sigmaringen, Capuchin. However, that was not necessary, because as soon as His Holiness saw His Eminence come in he summoned Mgr Cavalchini and told him that it was his absolute wish that the preparatory Congregation should meet on the said 5th of April so that, as soon as he returned from Benevento, the general Congregation should be informed in his presence that it was to terminate this glorious Cause.'17

Nothing occurred to interfere with the realisation of this plan. The general Congregation was held on July 12; the consultors and Cardinals freely stated their opinions, and then Benedict XIII asked for some time to implore the divine assistance before giving his decision. He did not delay very long, for two days later, after celebrating Mass

¹⁷ Recueil des principales circulaires, t. I, p. 355.

VOL. III.---2 E

in the Chapel of Saint Pius V, he declared that four miraculous cures had been established; those of Compoin, Lhuillier, Le Grand and Sister Mathurine Guérin. Four cures had been rejected, and so the devil's advocate and the promoter of the Cause had an equal share in the victory, but the latter was easily consoled for his semi-defeat as four miracles were more than enough for Beatification.

After twenty-four years of enquiries and discussions, Vincent de Paul had won his case. Jansenism, his eternal enemy, had appeared again to bar the way, but despite the dialectics of Prosper Lambertini, he had again triumphed over it.

The Brief of Beatification was issued on August 13, and on the 21st the vast Vatican basilica celebrated the feast of the Blessed Vincent de Paul. The ceremony was carried out in the usual manner with the customary decorations, rites and splendour. Three large pictures represented Vincent de Paul ascending to Heaven supported by angels, sharing in the glory of the saints, in the midst of angels bearing the attributes of his priesthood, and, finally, descending from the heavens to heal the sick.

In France, the feast was first celebrated at Saint-Lazare. On Sunday, September 25, in presence of Mgr Ventimille, Archbishop of Paris, the coffin containing the remains of the Blessed Vincent was opened. The flesh had 'almost disappeared,' the clothes were 'partly spoiled '1⁸ and this change could be explained either by the entrance of air at the time of the first opening in 1712, or by infiltration caused by two great inundations. These remains were now relics and, according to custom, the bones were removed to be distributed as gifts. The phalanges and the three first bones of the metacarpus of the left hand were removed ; one small bone was reserved for the Pope, another for the Archbishop of Paris ; the teeth were given to the Superior General, ¹⁹ and one of the short ribs to the Superioress of

¹⁸ Procès-verbal de l'exhumation (Arch. de la Mission); Collet, op. cit., t. II, p. 565.

¹⁹ On October 31, 1730, Father Bonnet obtained permission from the Archbishop of Paris to re-insert the teeth in the mouth ; he received in return some small bones and portion of the Saint's flesh.

the Daughters of Charity; a small bone to Cardinal de Fleury and the Duc de Noailles, the Princesse d'Armagnac, the Maréchale de Grammont and Mademoiselle de Beauvais were not forgotten.

The coffin was then closed and sealed ; six Priests of the Mission, vested in surplice and stole, carried it in procession, accompanied by the Archbishop and Clergy, to an altar in the Chapel of the Holy Angels from which it was removed. between Monday night and Tuesday morning, and placed in the middle of the Choir on a raised platform sustained by four pilasters crowned with bronze cherubim. September 27, 28 and 29 were set apart for the triduum, when the ceremonies were carried out with great splendour and dignity. On the first day, the Archbishop of Paris presided; on the second, the Archbishop of Bourges; on the third, the Bishop of Bayeux; the first sermon was preached by the gifted Jesuit, Father Tournemine. Order was preserved by thirty soldiers from the Invalides commanded by an officer; to increase the splendours of the feast, salvoes of artillery were discharged. The evening illuminations in front of the church were spoiled by wind and rain, but notwithstanding the bad weather, the church was filled with people during and between the devotions.²⁰

The Visitation Convents of Paris and Saint-Denis also held high festival. Wherever the Priests of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity had houses, wherever Vincent de Paul had passed, Dax, Clichy, Châtillon-les-Dombes and other places, triduums of prayer, religious ceremonies and thanksgiving were celebrated. Even the appellant bishops yielded to the general enthusiasm and united their praises with those which the Blessed Vincent now received on all sides.

However, the Superior General, Father Bonnet, discovered one large fly in the amber : the expenses that had been incurred and that had to be defrayed. The quarter of a century of canonical processes had entailed heavy expenditure, and even as far back as 1708, Father Wattel had begun to be alarmed. The process had begun only

²⁰ A printed report of the ceremonies by Father Bonnet (Arch. de la Mission).

three years previously, and he had had to pay out 3,200 livres to the registrar. An appeal, in the form of a circular letter. was addressed ' to the goodwill and the piety of the Mi sionaries.'²¹ Thirty-six houses in France and two in Italy sent contributions ; as the others were too poor. Saint-Lazare had to defray the largest part of the expense. Father Bonnet took stronger steps; on January 22, 1712. he imposed an annual tax on every house, in proportion to its revenues, which was to be levied as long as the process lasted. 'We are now,' he wrote, 22 'on the eve of an important decision in this great matter, and hitherto we have expended only 15,534 livres, 10 sols, 9 deniers; I do not think that what now remains to be done will prove so costly. Several persons, both within and without the Company, have contributed to the previous expenditure. and I trust they will contribute more willingly to what remains to be done.' Father Bonnet saw matters in a rosy The eve of the decision was still far off, and the light. 15,000 livres were to be far surpassed, for the ceremony of the Beatification alone cost him 50,000 livres or more.²³ The tax could not be maintained. As the great day drew near, he renewed his appeal and God came to his assistance. if not through his confrères, who had only modest resources at their disposal, at least through generous benefactors. The wealthy contributed liberally to the glorification of him who had never ceased to open his hand to assist the poor in their necessities.

After the heavy expense incurred by the Beatification, Father Bonnet felt inclined to put off to another day the second stage of the process, namely, that which stretches from beatification to canonisation, and which only entails the examination and approbation of two miracles. The advice of friends, the news of several extraordinary cures wrought by invoking the recently beatified Father of the poor in France, Italy and Poland, as well as the friendly attitude of Clement XII, who offered to complete the work of his predecessor, determined the Superior General to begin at once.²⁴

²¹ Recueil des principales circulaires, t. I, p. 244.
²² Ibid., p. 277.
²³ Ibid., p. 351.
²⁴ Ibid., p. 387.

There was no want of postulatory letters which were forwarded by persons in high position, such as the King and Oueen of France, the Duke of Sardinia, the Duke of Lorraine, the King and Oueen of England.²⁵ and the General Assembly of the Clergy of France.²⁶ There could be no question of submitting all the facts that were deemed miraculous to the Congregation of Rites : a selection had to be made, and seven sudden cures were chosen. These were Sister Mary Teresa of Saint-Basil, a Benedictine nun of Montmirail, who was suffering simultaneously from inveterate running ulcers, kidney disease, dropsy and paralysis of one side; Francis Richer, a Paris merchant. suffering from long established complete and incurable hernia; Catherine Jean, a paralytic, suffering from nervous twitchings of the whole body ; Peter Grurex, a sickly child whose limbs were so deformed that he resembled rather a monster than a human being; James Lemaître, who was covered with fetid pustules which gave him the appearance of a leper, and Lady Louise Elisabeth Sackville, who from the age of three had been suffering from lameness. Six miraculous cures in all, or rather seven, for as the first case had been the cure of two distinct, independent maladies it was reckoned as two.27

The Sacred Congregation of Rites examined the evidence of each case in turn, and the discussions were followed by successive eliminations. The fourth and sixth cases were the first to be rejected, and then the second, fifth and seventh; only the first and third had survived the test. If one or the other had to be abandoned, it would then have been necessary to wait for a fresh manifestation of the divine

 25 Ibid., p. 373. A minute of the King of France's letter is preserved in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Roman correspondence, 714, f^o 179, and a copy of the King of England's in the Archives of the Mission.

²⁸ Collection des procès-verbaux des Assemblées Générales du Clergé de France, t. VII, p. 1490 et P. 395 des pièces justificatives.

²⁷ Positio super dubio : an et de quibus miraculis constet post indultam eidem Beato venerationem in casu, etc. (Romae, 1735); Summarium; Animadversiones; Responsio ad animadversiones; Consilia pro veritate seu Dissertationes medico physica Marci Angeli de Marcangelis super miraculis.

At a meeting held on January 31, 1736, the power. Promoter of the Faith, Mgr Valenti, made a strong attack on the first; he pointed out that the replies of the nun who had been examined as a witness in France were, for a woman, very learned, and concluded from that fact that her evidence was neither completely free nor spontaneous. The promoter was supported in his opposition by some persons in high place such as Albani, the Cardínal Camerlingo. Malevolent tongues spread a report that the nun, whose cure was alleged to be miraculous, had implored the deacon Paris for a cure, and this falsehood, for it was one, created a bad impression. The Cause, however, was fortunate in having powerful supporters, such as Cardinal Lambertini, Mgr Almenaras, Patriarch of Antioch, and Consultor of the Congregation of Rites, and lastly, the Sovereign Pontiff himself. In June, Clement XII resolved to end the matter and said to Mgr Cervini: 'Come to me on Sunday the 24th, with the Promoter of the Faith, and I will publish the decree.' Valenti was about to celebrate the feast of Saint John the Baptist at Montecitorio with the Vincentian Fathers, who had asked him to sing High Mass that day, and just as he was leaving his apartments, he was handed a note from Mgr Cervini: 'When Mass is over,' wrote the latter, without disclosing the Pope's intention, 'I will call for you at Montecitorio, and we will go together to the Palace.' Clement XII, who was confined to bed by an attack of gout, said to the Proomter without any preamble : 'Read out the title of the Cause of the Blessed Vincent,' and, when this was done, the Pope added : ' Constare de primo et tertio ad effectum, etc.,' and sent both of them away with his blessing.

The decisive step had been taken; nothing now remained but to carry out the formalities, and the decree *de tuto* was signed on August 10.

The Superior General, Father Couty, was in no hurry to have the ceremonies that accompany the act of canonisation carried out; he was frightened at the idea of the expense they would entail, although it was said that Saint Juliana de Falconieri would be canonised on the same day. He preferred to wait for the result of two other Causes which

BEATIFICATION AND CANONISATION

were drawing to a close, those of Francis Regis and Catharine Flisca Adorna of Genoa, as his own share in the expenses would thereby be reduced.²⁸ On September 27, 1736, he wrote to ask his confrères to assist him either by personal contributions or by holding collections. 'Even if each of you gave only twenty sous,' he added, 'that would constitute a small sum, and small sums multiplied will make a considerable amount.'²⁹ 30,000 livres, subscribed by some generous lay-folk, were despatched to Rome. 'We shall be compelled,'³⁰ he wrote in another circular letter of January 14, 1737, 'to make up the balance by a tax to which each house should contribute, for the Cause is common to all and is most just and glorious.'

In the meantime preparations for the ceremony were being made at Rome, not without some little misunderstandings; the Chapter of Saint Peter's claimed that their basilica should be chosen in preference to that of Saint John Lateran; those devoted to Francis Regis were anxious that their Saint should be put before Vincent de Paul, and there was also some rivalry as to whether a Jesuit Brother, Pietro Giachini, or a Dominican Brother, each of whom claimed the right, should have charge of the works entailed by the ceremony; each of them obtained some satisfaction. It was not easy to please everybody, and the committee of four consultors who tried to do so were not always successful.³¹

At length the great day arrived and on June 13, 1737, the feast of the Holy Trinity, the secular and regular clergy began to assemble at five o'clock in the morning, waiting for the procession to start. At six o'clock the signal was given, and after a three hours' procession round the Lateran Palace, they entered the church by the main door. Ten Vincentian Fathers, each holding a torch, surrounded the

²⁸ Comptes de toutes les recettes et dépenses faites pour la canonisation de Saint Vincent de Paul, ms. in the Archives of the Congregation of the Mission. The details given above may be found in the chapter entitled : 'Remarques particulières sur l'affaire de la canonisation.'

29 Recueil des principales circulaires, t. I, p. 458.

30 Ibid., p. 460.

³¹ Comptes de toutes les recettes, etc.

banner of Saint Vincent, and a similar number of Jesuits that of Saint Francis Regis. The vast basilica, beautifully decorated and black with people, presented a magnificent sight. Twenty-seven Cardinals, hundreds of prelates, the King of England, Ambassadors and the Roman nobility were present. The Roman troops were at hand to preserve order and to guard the gates of the church and those of the galleries.

We shall not delay over a description of the different stages of the long ceremony; the 'obedience' of the Cardinals and Bishops, the petitions of the Consistorial Advocate, the Pope's prayer, the singing of the Litany of the Saints, the Veni Creator and its collect, the reading of the decree of canonisation, the discharge of artillery from the Castle of Sant Angelo, the chiming of bells, the peals from the silver trumpets, the offerings of wax-tapers, turtledoves, gilded loaves, pigeons, small barrels of wine, the chants in honour of the four saints, the proclamation of indulgences and the High Mass sung by the choir of the Lateran Palace. The day ended with a general illumination of the whole city; displays of fireworks were given again on the following day and even on the third evening, at the house of the Missionaries in Montecitorio.³²

Saint-Lazare could not, of course, vie with Rome, but here, too, everything passed off splendidly. The celebrations lasted for eight days (October 15-23) and each day Saint Vincent was praised by a gifted preacher. Vivant, the Grand Vicar who, in 1705, had opened the proceedings with a view to the Beatification, now opened the octave by reading the Bull of Canonisation on the evening of the 14th. Next day, the Chapter of Notre-Dame arrived in a body to assist at the Archbishop's Mass. The choir was occupied by the clergy, and the community retired to the chapel of Saint Lazarus. On the 16th, the Jesuit Fathers brought their novices, and on the 21st the Queen of Spain was received with the customary ceremonial. During these eight days, the number of priests who came every morning to celebrate Mass was so great that priests attached to the house had to go elsewhere to offer up the

³² Recueil des principales circulaires, t. I, p. 461.

Holy Sacrifice. Order was maintained, as at the Beatification, by thirty soldiers from the Invalides.³³

Father Couty, in his instructions for celebrating the Canonisation despatched to local superiors, asked them to be satisfied with one day 'without prejudice,' he added, 34 ' to the whole octave, which you should celebrate in private and without display.'

Accounts are still extant of the celebrations held at Versailles, in presence of the King, Queen and Court; at Montpellier and Troyes with the permission and participation of the Jansenist Bishops, Colbert and Bossuet; at Sens, where discontented Jansenists distributed and posted up insulting placards; at Dax, where a regrettable dispute arose between the Bishop and the Missionaries in regard to a picture and bust which the prelate wished to retain, although he had no right to them, and at Lyons, Bordeaux, Bazas, Angers, Rennes, Rodez and Montargis. Jansenists, in some places, were selected to preach the panegyric of Saint Vincent, and did so in excellent fashion.³⁵

The Bull of Canonisation had, however, greatly annoyed the Jansenist party. Scarcely had it been issued than the Parliament ordered it to be suppressed, and forbade it to be printed, sold and distributed. The Reporter General, after a great eulogy of the new Saint, stated : 'One cannot fail to recognise in the expressions employed (in the Bull) the spirit of exaggerated partisans of the Court of Rome in regard to the plenary powers which they attribute to the said Court in ecclesiastical affairs, and especially, as far as doctrine is concerned, on the blind obedience which they wish should be paid to its decrees as soon as they are promulgated, and on the rigorous penalties which the secular power cannot carry out sufficiently soon for their taste.' Immediately after this statement, Father Couty received two communications; one from the Parliament itself, to put him on his guard against false interpretations of the decree, for it was alleged that Parliament had no

³³ Ms. account (Arch. de la Mission).

 ⁸⁴ Recueil des principales circulaires, t. I, p. 464.
 ⁸⁵ Les Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques and L'Avocat du diable refer to these celebrations but in a Jansenistic tone.

desire either to attack the holiness of Saint Vincent or to prevent the solemnities of the canonisation; and the other from Cardinal de Rohan. On January 15, 1738, de Rohan wrote to Father Couty³⁶: 'The Cardinal Minister wishes you to draw up a petition to the King on behalf of your Bull of Canonisation and as His Excellence desires that this should be done promptly, would you not think it well, after collecting and revising your documents, to come here? You will find three grounds of complaint set out in M. Gilbert's pleadings. You will also observe the admission which he has made that the alleged attack on our liberties is only indirect. Wisdom and reason are your weapons : they are in good hands, and you know, sir, my sentiments in your regard.' Father Couty immediately obeyed this urgent invitation and on January 22, the King's Council annulled the Parliament's decree. "The King in Council." the royal edict states, 'has permitted and permits the printing and distribution of the said Bull. If Parliament fears lest some expressions to be found in this Bull may be abused by a too rigorous interpretation of the document, it might easily have provided for this inconvenience by the general and usual precautions employed in this matter, without going so far as to forbid the printing of the Bull.' Parliament, however, did not regard itself as beaten, but presented its 'very humble and respectful remonstrances' to the King on June 20. Louis XIV simply replied : ' My Council will examine them,' and Parliament had to wait until August 29 for the result of this examination. 'I have taken steps to deal with the substance of your remonstrances,' the King dryly remarked, ' and will always show a similar attention to the maintenance of the laws of my Kingdom and the peace and tranquillity of my realm.'

The Parliament was not without allies in this campaign. The Jansenists were deeply wounded by some rather forcible expressions against their party contained in the Bull. Twenty parish priests of the city and suburbs of Paris and its environs sued against the Pope, on the plea of definite and outrageous defamation; they considered themselves referred to by the words : 'especially at a time

³⁶ A copy of this letter is in the Archives of the Mission.

when innovators were endeavouring to disseminate their errors in France, to disturb therein the peace of the Catholic Church, and to separate the simple from the unity of the Holy See, by publishing false and spurious miracles.' At their request, some friendly lawyers drew up a long report which was to form the basis of a legal action against the Pontifical document. 'The Bull,' it is stated, 'contains several other clauses which render it one of the most improper Bulls that have appeared in recent times. It would seem as if the canonisation of the founder of the Mission was only a pretext, and that the real object proposed therein was a denial of our most holy maxims, an insinuation of those most contrary to them, a direct attack on our holy liberties, a hateful suggestion of the state of France in the last century, and even an attempt to disturb it in this.' The report of the twenty priests was drawn up and signed on January 22, 1738, and if they gained nothing else from it, they had at least the satisfaction of seeing their lawyers' memorandum printed and widely distributed amongst the public.

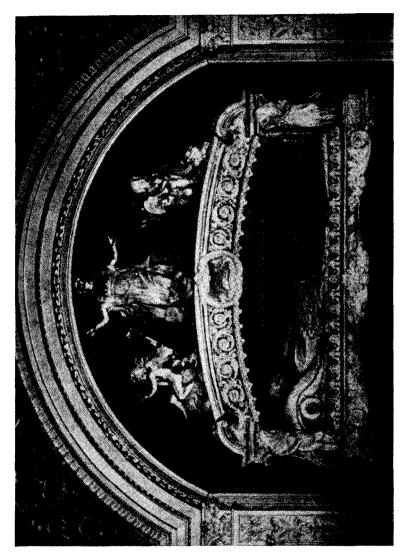
Amongst other Jansenist writings dealing with the Bull we may mention: The Devil's Advocate,³⁷ A letter from a Country Canon and A letter from M— to M— The last might have been more properly called A letter from an appellant Jansenist to a fellow Jansenist who has been scandalised by the fact of the cult rendered to Saint Vincent de Paul. The author, although belonging to the party, is a fervent admirer of the new saint, whom he stoutly defends especially against some sarcastic remarks of the Country Canon.

'Judge,' he writes, ' of the indignation with which I have seen a country canon refer to Vincent as a decent fellow who procured an asylum for madmen, a home for incorrigibles, missions in country places, seminaries and "soup-pot Sisters" for parishes. Does this alleged canon

³⁷ L'Avocat du diable ou Mémoires historiques et critiques sur la vie et sur la légende du Pape Grégoire VII, avec des mémoires, de même goût, sur la bulle de canonisation de Vincent de Paul (by Adam, parish priest of Saint-Bartholomew, Paris), Saint-Pourçain, 1743, 3 vol. in-12. The part that concerns us forms the fifth section, Vol. II, pp. 181-390. then imagine that to be an appellant and to be devoid of reason and shame are synonymous terms? Does he think that the more than twenty thousand missions given by Saint Vincent or by his orders in almost every diocese of this Kingdom, in Italy, the Republic of Genoa, Corsica, Piedmont, Ireland, the Hebrides, even Algeria and Tunis, besides an infinity of other places, should count for nothing, because all that may be expressed in a word of three syllables? Does he think that the four or five thousand sick, and perhaps even more, who are nursed every day in various provinces by these generous daughters who so well portray the virtue of the Founder, is only a mere bagatelle in the eyes of the faith, because it is done by persons to whom the rabble and a country canon give the name of "soup-pot" Sisters? Why does he not add, in the same style, that good man Vincent also provided for the rearing of little bastards, and procured clean straw for galley-slaves? He may have won the applause of the disciples of Brother Augustine, but decent folk and honourable and upright men will respect the work of God, and party spirit will not suffer Christians to refuse the man of mercy praises which heresy and infidelity have never denied him.'

We may end this chapter with this eulogy, which is all the more pleasing as coming from a Jansenist.

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CHAPTER LXVII

THE RELICS¹

E shall not revert here to what we have already said in other chapters about the relics of Saint Vincent de Paul; the autopsy of the body after death, the removal of the heart and viscera to be preserved apart, the burial of the precious remains in the vaults of the church of Saint-Lazare, the enquiry *de non-cultu* held in 1705, the inspection of the tomb on February 19, 1712, the second opening of the tomb on September 25, 1729, when the bones were removed and distributed.

After the Beatification, the body was enclosed in a silver casket, which was placed on the retable of the altar dedicated to Saint Lazarus, over which there was a beautiful painting of the Servant of God ascending to Heaven in the midst of a group of attendant angels. This casket was opened on several occasions; in 1739, to replace the linen alb with one of cloth of silver; in 1747, to gild the interior; and in 1759 to remove the plastic mask that covered the head and to substitute in its stead one of silver-gilt. Unfortunately, every time the seals were broken, there was a fresh mutilation of the body.

The devotion of the faithful was manifested more especially during the feast of the Saint and its octave. Father Bonnet, the Superior General, writing on October 1, 1731, estimates the number of pilgrims who came to kneel before the relic

¹ Works consulted : Le corps de Saint Vincent de Paul (par M. vandamme), in-8°, Abbeville, 1913; Le cœur de Saint Vincent de Paul à Lyon, par l'abbé A. Sachet, in-8°, Lyon, 1929; the Archives of the Mission contain a large amount of evidence on this subject and it is on those we chiefly rely. The four pastorals of Mgr de Quélen, Archbishop of Paris, dated March 10 and April 6, 1830, and April 7 and July 10, 1834, are of great value for the history of the translation of the relics.

on the Vigil of the feast, at 40,000.² Pilgrimages were made right up to the worst days of the Revolution. On August 31, 1793, the Missionaries, on the eve of their expulsion, and deprived of the silver shrine by the Commissary of National Property, placed the holy relics in an oaken chest, furnished with a hinged cover and a lock, and removed it to the house of the Community's legal adviser, Maître Claret, in the Rue des Bourdonnais. The precious treasure remained here for three years, hidden beneath a pile of boxes, books and papers. In 1795, Father Daudet, the Procurator General, took it to his lodgings in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Etienne.

The years went by, and the anarchy of the Revolution was succeeded by Bonaparte's reign of order. The Daughters of Charity, legally authorised in 1800, received from the State as their Mother-House, a home for orphan girls in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier. Whilst the Priests of the Mission were waiting for a residence of their own, it seemed quite natural that the body of the holy founder should be guarded by his Daughters. In 1806, Father Brunet, the Vicar General, handed it over to them, and they retained possession of it for twenty-four years; nine in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, and fifteen in the Rue du Bac. When in 1815 they arrived at their new home, building operations were not quite finished, and the chest was kept in a room from June to August 15, 1815, when it was brought down to the Chapel and placed under an altar dedicated to Saint Vincent de Paul. The body was still there in 1827, when the Vincentian Fathers, established for ten years at 95 Rue de Sèvres, formerly the Hôtel de Lorges, completed the building of their chapel, which had been begun in the preceding year. A place was reserved for it above and behind the high altar.

Mgr de Quélen, Archbishop of Paris, had himself ordered a shrine from one of the best known goldsmiths in Paris, M. Odiot. This work of art was awarded a gold medal at the Exhibition of 1827, and the general opinion was that it thoroughly deserved it. The shrine is rectangular in shape with a curved top; it measures 2 metres 25 centimetres in length, 65 centimetres in breadth and the height varies

² Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance de Rome, 727, f° 168. from 1.05 metres in the centre to 90 centimetres at the ends. It is surmounted by a group of figures representing Saint Vincent in glory, ascending to Heaven accompanied by four angels bearing emblems of religion, faith, hope and charity. In front, at the ends, two orphans, a little boy and a little girl, stand on pedestals with their eyes fixed on the Saint whose help they seem to implore. In the centre of the semi-circular arch is an ornamental scroll bearing an inscription in gilt letters: *Corpus Sancti Vincentii a Paulo*. The pillars and the arch are wreathed in ornamental foliage which gives the shrine an elegant appearance. The Archbishop of Paris purchased it himself as a gift for the Congregation of the Mission in the name of his diocese, and kept it in his own house until the translation of the relics.

Even before the Chapel in the Rue de Sèvres was completed, the Archbishop had drawn up his plans. The holy relics were removed from the Rue du Bac to Notre-Dame from which they were to be carried in procession to the Mother House of the Vincentians. It was to be a splendid demonstration through the streets of the capital in the midst of a numerous and enthusiastic throng, proud and glad to acclaim the benefactor of the poor and the destitute. The feast was to have a novena, and the faithful would come from every parish in the city, each on its appointed day, to kneel before the shrine.

Mgr de Quélen informed the Holy See of his intentions, and at his request a rescript, dated June 13, 1827, granted a plenary indulgence to all who took part in the procession on the day fixed for the translation of the relics. Other spiritual favours were granted to all who prayed with a devout and contrite heart in the chapel in the Rue de Sèvres, namely, an indulgence of 300 days during the novena, renewable at each visit, and a plenary indulgence every year on July 19 and September 27.

When the Chapel was completed, it was blessed by Mgr de Quélen on November 1, 1827.

Everything was now ready for the reception of Saint Vincent's body, but, as the prelate well knew, the state of political feeling counselled prudence. A great religious manifestation, before the eyes of the public, in a city like Paris, was scarcely possible save at a time when popular passions were not aroused. Clouds, however, were piling up on the political horizon and the revolution of 1830 was on the way. On November 6, the Chamber was dissolved; the elections brought about the resignation of the Minister, Villèle, who was replaced by Martignac. The Jesuits were attacked and expelled from their colleges. Martignac resigned and was succeeded by Polignac, and public attention gradually began to turn from home to foreign affairs and especially to Algeria.

In the beginning of 1830, public opinion seemed to have grown calmer, and on March 10, Mgr de Quélen issued a pastoral to his flock to inform them that the translation would take place on April 25, the second Sunday after Easter, and would be followed by a novena of prayers and solemn supplication in which all churches and chapels in the diocese would take part, and that a subscription list would be opened to defray the price of the silver shrine. The King and the members of the Royal family headed the list of subscriptions and the Archbishop had great hopes that their example would ensure success. In addition, he requested the parish priests to hold one or more collections, and, thinking that there would be a surplus, he announced that the balance would be given to the Daughters of Charity and by them devoted to the needs of the respectable poor of the diocese.

On March 30, the body was taken from the Sisters' house to the Archbishop's palace, there to await its removal to the Rue de Sèvres.

The first three weeks of April were taken up in carrying out the preliminary formalities. From the 2nd to the 5th, evidence was taken to establish the authenticity of the relics ; several witnesses were heard, and especially all those who had had any dealings with Maître Claret or Father Daudet. On the 5th, Father Salhorgne, the Superior-General, announced the great news in a circular letter, and asked that each house of the Company should unite in the solemnities to be held in Paris by celebrating a feast in honour of Saint Vincent.

On the 6th, Mgr de Quélen issued another pastoral letter in which he made arrangements for the ceremonies

of the feast and its octave. As an expedition was then setting out for Algiers, he had the happy idea of reminding the faithful of the interest which the former slave in Barbary had taken in those who were captives in that infidel land, and of placing the Army and Navy under his powerful protection. In this way the translation was put forward as the prayer of France for the success of her soldiers. The chest was opened on the 6th, its contents carefully examined and described in the minutest detail ; within the box were seals. official reports, bandages, compresses, ribbons, silk or linen wrappings, clothes and a skeleton. The latter measured one metre eighty-two centimetres, and was obviously that of an old man; the skull presented the distinctive characteristic of the busts and portraits of Saint Vincent. Thirteen teeth were missing; seven from the upper and six from the lower jaw, and also eleven ribs, the bones of the left hand and the patella of the right knee. The bones were held in their respective position by iron and brass wires, and the legs were bent back upon the body and rested against the thorax. Copper bands were inserted in place of the missing ribs. When the examination was completed, all withdrew, as it was then too late to proceed with the work.

There was another meeting on the 10th, when the doctors restored the legs to their natural position, re-united the disjointed bones and consolidated all bony structures that were in danger of becoming detached. As the left hand was missing from the skeleton, there could be no question of stretching out the right hand, and at first there was an idea of presenting it to Mgr de Quélen; but on his refusal, it was attached to the right side of the breast. When this was done, the bones were wrapped in silk wadding, the cavity of the chest was also filled with wadding and lint, and the body was then vested.

The clothes selected formed a striking contrast with those worn by the Saint in his life-time; first of all, the remains were vested in a silk, shirt-shaped tunic; then came a magnificent alb of embroidered tulle, the cuffs being of crimson silk; the girdle consisted of a white silk ribbon; the stole was of richly embroidered violet watered-silk; the cassock was of black silk with a cambric collar instead of

VOL. III.-2 F

a neck-band; a black silk girdle; a rochet of fine pleated cambric with wide sleeves and lace cuffs; silk stockings and velvet slippers; a preaching-stole of richly embroidered cloth of gold with golden cord, tassels and fringes, and lastly a black silk skull cap. The alb had been presented by a devout lady, the watered-silk stole by the Daughters of Charity, and the preaching-stole by the Archbishop of Paris.

In order that the body might present a human appearance, wax models of the face and hands were added.

On the previous evening, the Metropolitan Chapter had decided to present to Saint-Lazare a painted and varnished wooden crucifix which had long been the property of the treasury of Notre-Dame, and which was said to have been used by Saint Vincent when assisting at the death of Louis XIII. This was placed between the waxen hands. This cross, which had been plated with silver up to the crossbars, supports an ivory figure of Our Lord with the usual superscription. Beneath the image of Our Saviour is a small, oblong, silver reliquary decorated with rock-crystal containing fragments of the true Cross and relics of Saint Victor. Lower down there is a coral representation of the Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus and an infant Saint John the Baptist at His side holding a Cross.

Mgr de Quélen had drawn up a list of churches that should not be forgotten when the relics were to be distributed. To the treasury of the Metropolitan Church of Paris was assigned the patella of the left knee; the Chapel in the Rue de Bac received the lower half of the right radius; the Church of the Hôtel-Dieu and that of the Hospital de la Pitié, the Cathedral of Versailles, the Church of Clichy, the Church of Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, and the Archbishop himself shared the upper half of the right radius. Mgr de Quélen also retained for himself various particles that had become detached during or before the reconstruction of the skeleton. When the holy remains were vested, they were placed on a couch supported by a raised platform; this couch consisted of a violet velvet cushion covered with golden gauze; a pillow of the same colour and material was ornamented with golden fringes and golden tassels at the four corners.

The body remained thus exposed for thirteen days, and the faithful came in large numbers to see and venerate it.

On the 23rd, Mgr de Quélen blessed the shrine, placed the relics within it, and affixed the seals. All was now ready for the great day.

On the 24th, after the midday Angelus, the great bell of Notre-Dame and the bells of all the churches in Paris announced to the citizens that the great festival was about to begin. The shrine and its contents were now taken from the Archbishop's house, borne on the shoulders of ten men who were surrounded by twenty others, all of whom were vested in long albs. The Archbishop and his Chapter awaited them at the door of the church. At two o'clock, the liturgical offices began : First Vespers, Compline, Matins and Lauds, interrupted after Compline by a panegyric on Saint Vincent delivered by Canon Mathieu, Promoter and Vicar General of the diocese, afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Besancon. The immense cathedral was filled with people; nine bishops were present and Father Salhorgne had brought almost all his confrères. In the evening, after the Angelus, the bells again began to ring out joyous peals.

Early on the following morning, the streets leading to Notre-Dame were black with people and Saint Vincent's name was on every lip. The church was magnificently adorned with flags, but the shrine, or rather, the body within it, was the great centre of attraction and it became necessary to maintain order around it. After Prime had been chanted, the canonical Mass was celebrated, followed by the parochial Mass, and then by the Archbishop's; this took a considerable length of time, owing to the numbers who went to Holy Communion. High Mass was then sung by His Excellency, Mgr Ludovico Lambruschini, Archbishop of Genoa and Papal Nuncio in Paris.

The sun pierced through the clouds; the weather was mild and pleasant, a beautiful spring day, and everything gave promise for a splendid afternoon. The faithful did not wait for the hour fixed for Vespers to take their places; they were present in thousands, counting the minutes that were to pass before Vespers would begin. At last two o'clock arrived and eighteen bishops entered. The King's

almoners, the clergy of Paris and its environs, representatives of religious Orders and Communities, and clerical students from the seminaries, formed an imposing group of ecclesiastics. White cornettes were to be seen on all sides and it was reckoned that about a thousand Sisters of Charity were present; naturally, their orphan boys and girls were there at the festival, for their place should be near their blessed protector. Official personages were also present including the Prefect of the Department of the Seine, the Prefect of Police, the Mayors of the IXth and Xth arrondissements, the Commander of the gendarmerie, Peers of France, several members of the General Council and of the administrative staffs of various hospices. All the suburban parishes sent contingents, but Clichy's was perhaps the strongest.

At the end of the first Psalm, the procession began to form whilst Vespers proceeded to a conclusion. The Crossbearers of the Chapter, accompanied by acolytes, moved towards the main door, and before them, sappers, drummers and a platoon of gendarmes took up their positions. Behind them came in order the parochial clergy, seminarists, parish priests, Priests of the Mission, the metropolitan clergy, the Metropolitan Chapter, the King's almoner, bishops, the Archbishop of Paris and his retinue, and public functionaries. Then came the lay associations of Sainte Geneviève and of Saint Joseph, the inhabitants of Clichy, the Brothers of Christian Doctrine, each group bearing its own banner.

The Governor of Paris had sent eight companies; four of grenadiers and four of infantry riflemen; the soldiers marched on each side of the procession, from the crossbearers to the public officials. There were also in the centre military bands, in the middle of the seminarists, and a platoon of gendarmes brought up the rear.

Keeping pace with the Vincentian Fathers, came the shrine escorted by its guard of honour; it was borne by ten men of the associations of Sainte Geneviève and Saint Joseph; ten walked in front, and ten behind the shrine, all vested in cassocks, albs and silk girdles, with a medal of Saint Vincent on their breasts suspended from their

shoulders by a violet ribbon. The cords were held by four priests vested in albs and white embroidered chasubles; the parish priest of Saint-Roch, the Dean of the parochial clergy of Paris, the Superior of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and the parish priests of Saint Vincent de Paul and of Clichy. In addition, there were four clerics each bearing a lighted wax candle. After leaving Notre-Dame, the first halt was made, at the request of the nuns and patients, outside the Hôtel-Dieu, with incensing and prayers; the procession then moved over the Petit-Pont and along the quays on the right bank of the river, turned into the Rue des Saints-Pères and arrived at the Rue de Sèvres after passing through the Rue Taranne, the Rue du Dragon and the Carrefour de la Croix-Rouge. Doors and windows were adorned with oriflammes, banners, garlands and flowers. The journey was broken by three halts; the first on the square before the Palais de l'Institut, quite close to the spot where Saint Vincent resided during the first years of his sojourn in Paris; the second, in the Rue des Saint-Pères, opposite the Charity Hospital, which he had so often visited, and the last in the Rue de Sèvres, between the Hospice des Menages and the residence of the Lady Hospitallers of Saint Thomas of Villanova. Only the cortège and the shrine, the bishops, the Chapter, and the celebrant halted.

A crowd of sightseers, massed upon the side-walks, watched the procession go by; one would like to be able to say that that all manifested their enthusiasm by cheers but some showed nothing but 'coldness or hostility.' More than one ostentatiously remained with his head covered. 'The most popular of French saints,' writes M. de la Gorce,³ 'found no more favour than the best abused Jesuit.' Not indeed that the public at heart had anything against Saint Vincent, but hostility against Charles X, daily stimulated by the press, could not fail to render unpopular a religious manifestation supported by the government, all the more so as some newspapers had published inflammatory articles against illegal processions, and others cast doubts on the authenticity of the relic.

The chapel of the Rue de Sèvres was far too small to hold

³ Charles X, Paris, Plon, 1928, in-8°, p. 261.

all those who had accompanied the shrine; only the most important personages and the parish priests were allowed to enter; the Sisters of Charity and their orphans were relegated to the galleries. Father Salhorgne awaited the Archbishop at the door, presented holy water, incensed him, and then the moving ceremony of the official handing over of the relic and its silver casket took place. The Archbishop spoke first:

'Father General,' he said, 'it is, we venture to say, in the name of the clergy of France, and even of the Catholic Church, that we now come to replace in your hands the precious deposit which has remained for some time in ours. We restore to his children the body of their Venerable Father which they had the happiness to save from profanation, and which we are so happy as to be able to surround with fresh tributes of reverence and honour. We render back to the worthy Priests of the Mission the relics of their holy founder, of that great priest whom we may well style great, for all the labours of his life were pleasing to to the Lord : *Ecce sacerdos magnus qui in diebus suis placuit Domino*.

'It is, moreover, in the name of the poor, of whom Vincent de Paul was so especially the father and protector, that we restore these sacred remains after having presented them before the immense populace of a city so full of memories and monuments of his charity. On coming here to prostrate ourselves before the sanctuary above which this indefatigable friend of man should repose as of yore, each of us can apply to himself with sweet and consoling truthfulness, the words of the Psalmist : poor himself, but rich in faith, he found means to solace the miseries of all: adjuvit pauperem de inopia. Without any other credit than that of the confidence earned by his piety, he was able to make those who could never otherwise enjoy them taste of the sweetness of family life : posuit sicut oves familias ; the just will rejoice thereat, and the silence even of the impious will proclaim his triumph : videbunt recti et laetabuntur et omnis iniquitas oppilabit os suum.'

Father Salhorgne was deeply moved and replied in a voice trembling with emotion :

'Your Grace, the public, solemn and peaceful triumph of a holy priest in this nineteenth century, and in the midst of this great city, is a sort of prodigy which enkindles our admiration and which posterity will have some difficulty in reconciling with the indifference to religion unhappily too common at the present day.

'God, who is wonderful in His saints, has chosen you, my Lord, to work this prodigy. It is He who inspired you with the generous desire to reanimate the faith of many men and to bring them back to the thought of God by the imposing spectacle of the honours rendered to the bones of his humble servant. The soul that acts in response to a divine impulse is assured of success, because it is superior to the obstacles that discourage ordinary zeal.

'Saint Vincent de Paul to-day obtains a truly Christian glory, since he receives it from a prince of the Church who honours this high dignity by his virtues, shows that he is a worthy rival of his great predecessors, and whose good deeds will be published by our grand-nephews, as we to-day celebrate those of the hero of charity. At this moment, Your Grace, you make your own shine forth by the magnificence with which you deign to present the mortal remains of their blessed father to his children, and he, from on high, applauds your generous devotion. No words can express our gratitude for an object of which we know the full value, since it is a testimony of the distinguished protection with which Your Grace honours us.

'When, prostrate every day before the body of our holy founder, we pray to God to render us participators in his virtues, it will be a most sweet duty for us to beseech Him to grant Your Grace many long and prosperous days. The sight of this splendid monument will unceasingly remind us of what we owe you and will perpetuate in our hearts sentiments of the liveliest gratitude and of the most profound veneration.'

After this, Mgr de Quélen entered the choir and incensed the relics, whilst the responses at First Vespers and the *Domine salvum* were chanted. The ceremony ended with the Papal benediction. As it was now late, Mgr Cottret, Bishop of Carysta and Canon of Saint-Denis, was unable to preach the panegyric, but those who regretted that they had not heard it, had the consolation of reading it when, shortly afterwards, it was printed.

The feast was not yet over, for it lasted for nine days. During the novena, the little Chapel in which the body of Saint Vincent had been placed was crowded with pilgrims from four o'clock in the morning until nine at night. The six altars were never free : Mass followed Mass uninterruptedly until midday. Every morning a bishop solemnly pontificated and in the afternoon a sermon was preached on the great apostle of charity. All the parishes of Paris came in turn, five or six each day. Sunday was reserved for seminarists and ecclesiastical establishments. Sisters from the Rue du Bac, including the novices, did not fail to be present every day of the novena. All were free to enter the choir and sanctuary, unless when ceremonies were being celebrated ; the faithful knelt before the shrine. prayed, kissed it reverently and touched it with their crucifixes, medals, pictures, linen, rings, necklaces, prayerbooks and swords, because contact with the holy relics bestowed on these objects a sort of sacred character, the source of innumerable graces.

The little Chapel was honoured by the presence of pilgrims of rank; on Wednesday morning, the Dauphiness heard Mass, and on the following day, she returned at five o'clock in the afternoon accompanied by the King and the Duchesse de Berry. The Archbishop of Paris received the King and, according to the protocol, bade him welcome. 'Sire,' he began, 'the solemn homage rendered to Saint Vincent de Paul in the heart of the capital is well calculated to rejoice Your Majesty. The faithful and many of the people of your good city of Paris have again shown themselves, in the circumstances, worthy to obey their most Christian King. Your Majesty, by coming here to join with your people in venerating the precious remains of an humble priest who was the honour of the priesthood and the friend of the poor, reveals to us the lofty sentiments of your faith and the touching secrets of your heart.

'No doubt, Sire, your religion and charity had no need of this new testimony. Your works of royal piety and munificence are visible in all directions, but your presence in the midst of the children of Saint Vincent de Paul fills the cup of their happiness to the brim, and it is also a just recompense for their devotedness, reverence and love.'

The King's reply was brief: 'My Lord Archbishop, on coming here to venerate the relics of a holy priest, so dear to humanity, I had above all a desire to obtain, by his intercession, the happiness of my people. I will confidently ask him to present this desire to God ; it is the most ardent wish of my heart, and I doubt not that his prayers will be heard.' Charles X knelt before the relic, received the blessing of the Most Holy Sacrament and was led back to his carriage amidst cheering crowds. On leaving the Chapel, he said to Father Salhorgne who was presented by the Archbishop: 'To pray for the happiness of my people is the same thing as to pray for mine.'

On Saturday at midday a detachment of veterans from the Hôtel-Royal des Invalides, preceded by a military band, arrived. Whilst the soldiers were praying to Saint Vincent, the band played a selection of military airs; it was a touching homage to the founder of the Daughters of Charity by those old veterans who were happy to manifest their gratitude to the Sisters who devoted themselves so whole-heartedly to their service.

Mgr de Quélen ordered a medal to be struck in commemoration of the great feast of April 25. On one side was an upright figure of the Blessed Virgin holding the Child Jesus in her arms, which was modelled on a statue in the Chapel of the Lady Hospitallers of Saint Thomas of Villanova, Rue de Sèvres, and on the other, a bust of Saint Vincent de Paul over a reproduction of the shrine. Thirty thousand copper medals were distributed or sold. Gold, enamel, silver and bronze medals were struck for various dignitaries including the Pope, the King, the Princes and Princesses of the Royal Family and the bishops who had been present at the translation.

Charles X had contributed to the production of the medal; the proceeds of the sale, after deducting the costs of production, were to be added to the fund for the payment of the silver shrine, in addition to sums already subscribed and collected. It was not quite so easy to pay for the shrine as the Archbishop of Paris had first hoped; the King and the Royal Family gave 16,800 francs, 25,000 more were collected, and the Archbishop himself gave 2,000 francs from his private purse; but this total of 43,800 was still far below the goldsmith's bill for 62,756 francs.

On July 29, 1830, when the Archbishop's house was broken into and plundered, Mgr de Quélen had 15,500 francs in his possession, the proceeds of the most recent collections. Deprived of all, he was unable to pay his debts. M. Odiot began to grow impatient ; the shrine had been taken back to his workshops, in circumstances to be mentioned later, and he spoke of melting it down, and using it for other The debtor and creditor could not reach an purposes. agreement on the interest to be paid or on the experts' reports, so the matter was taken to law; the judges decided in favour of Odiot, and their sentence was confirmed on The Archbishop of Paris, already worried by appeal. former debts, now saw the additional expenses of the lawsuits added to his burden, nor was this his only or greatest cause of anxiety. Evil tongues were whispering that the prelate had diverted to his own use the sums subscribed for the shrine, and that the story of the 15,500 francs in the Archbishop's house was a pure piece of fiction intended to deceive the public. The accused, unfortunately, could not justify himself, but he put his confidence in God and was not disappointed.

An appeal addressed on April 7, 1834, to the generosity of his diocesans was heard in distant provinces. Everybody subscribed; even those in need. The hospice at Agen sent 44.75 francs; 34.75 from the children, 1.50 from the sick and 8.50 from the domestics.⁴ It was an alms from the poor to their great benefactor. On July 10, a new pastoral was issued to the diocese of Paris stating that the amount required had been over-subscribed. 'Not only,' said the prelate, 'have the voluntary offerings placed in our hands up to this present day reached the sum needed for the shrine of Saint Vincent; not only have they sufficed to pay the costs of the lawsuit involved, but the blessing of Heaven

⁴ L'Univers religieux, July 10, 1834.

has caused them to increase and multiply to such an extent that children who have been rendered orphans by the cholera-morbus will have reason to rejoice at the superabundance of your gifts.'

Another appeal was addressed, but not on this occasion to purses, but to poets; a prize was offered for the best poem in honour of the feast of the translation of the relics. The Revolution interrupted this poetical contest; otherwise, we should no doubt have garlands of verses in honour of Saint Vincent. Several were printed; one was signed Poupinet,⁵ and the other only with the initials D.J.F. Ch.⁶ The anonymous poet deserved to be known, for his verses were not wanting in inspiration.

The Revolution of 1830 not only attacked the throne; the clergy, as we have seen, also had a to suffer, for they were accused of covenanting with the King and of concealing arms. The Archbishop's house, the sacristy of Notre-Dame, the Church of Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois, the residences of the Missionaries of France and of the Jesuits were sacked on July 29. The country houses of the Fathers of the Holy Ghost and of the Vincentians at Gentilly were not spared, though they suffered very little damage. The house in the Rue de Sèvres was also invaded by a large crowd, but the search for arms passed off quietly, and the chapel was not visited. It was wise to prepare for all eventualities; hence, on the following day, the most precious objects and most important documents were conveyed to a place of safety. They did not venture to open the reliquary, as this would have necessitated the breaking of the archiepiscopal seals; efforts were made to get into touch with Mgr de Quélen, but he could not be found, and hence there was a month's delay. At length, the reliquary was opened on August 27th, and the shrine taken to M. Odiot, whilst its precious contents were secretly hidden in the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity. As this was not regarded as a sufficiently secure hiding-place, it was resolved to remove the relics to Roye in Picardy and this was done on March 7th, 1831. The body was concealed in the cellar of a small house

⁵ Paris, Rusand, 1830, in-8°.

⁶ Paris, Le Clère, 1834, in-8°.

adjacent to the College, which at that time was in charge of the Priests of the Mission.

It remained there in its obscure retreat, which was known only to a lay-brother and the superior, waiting for the political horizon to clear. In 1834, it was taken back to Paris a few days previous to the anniversary of the translation. The chapel, closed since the political troubles, was again thrown open to the public, and the feast that year was celebrated as splendidly as possible. The Mother House had recovered its treasure and it was only fitting that it should manifest its joy by splendid liturgical celebrations and rich decorations.

The first members of the Society of Conferences, founded the preceding year by Frederick Ozanam and called, at the request of John Louis Le Prévost, 'The Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul ' had taken part in the ceremonies in honour of their heavenly patron. They returned every year on the same day, and when the Society was divided into several branches, one was established at 95 Rue de Sèvres where the weekly meetings were held. Several remarkable men belonged to this branch; amongst others, Mgr de Ségur and his brother, the future Père Olivaint, and two other men who afterwards became priests : Doctor Ferrand de Mistrol, founder of the nursing Little Sisters of the Rue Cassette, and Le Prévost who subsequently established the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul. Le Prévost was accustomed to come every day to receive Holy Communion in the Chapel, and to recommend his project to him under whose protection it had been placed. A friend, M. Myionnet, offered to join him, and both went on retreat. On the last day of the exercises, March 3, 1845, they assisted together, before the uncovered shrine at seven o'clock Mass, which was celebrated for their intention by Mgr Angebault, Bishop of Angers. The latter met them after his thanksgiving, and he exhorted and blessed them. M. Maignen was also present and promised to join them later, for just then he was not free to do so.⁷

⁷ Souvenirs des visites charitables de Clément Myionnet, des Frères de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, by Daniel Fontaine, in-18, Paris, 1898, p. 51.

At this time, the high altar was rather plain and the shrine was almost unapproachable. The Superior General, Father Etienne, was grieved at this, and erected a superb altar in 1854; he also built the two stairs at the back of the altar by which access to the relic is secured.

On September 7, 1870, when the approach of the Prussians was reported, the bones were removed from the shrine, folded up in a veil, and placed in a large casket which was taken in a carriage to the house of the Sisters of Charity in the Rue du Bac. A hole had been dug in a cellar into which the casket was lowered; the better to conceal it, it was covered up to the level of the floor with old books and rags. As the danger increased with the triumph of the Commune, the Sisters' house was no longer regarded as sufficiently secure, and it was decided to transfer the casket to 27 Avenue de Breteuil, the residence of a sister of one of the Daughters of Charity, an American widow named Madame Roman, who lent a room on the mezzanine floor. The removal was carried out with the greatest secrecy; it took place whilst the other tenants were at dinner; the casket was surrounded by huge baskets; portions of the shrine were piled up beneath, and over them a layer of apples was placed, so that it looked as if Madame Roman was receiving supplies from the country. The house, placed under the protection of the United States Consul, was not, for all that, safe from the Prussian artillery; a shell fell on the upper story and killed a young girl.

When peace was restored, the interior of the shrine was lined with white silk and gold, and the body brought back to the Mother House for the feast of Saint Vincent, July 19.

The shrine was reopened in 1873 in order to change the vestments which had been attacked by moths, and again in 1894, to restore the interior, renew the decorations and replace the cushions and the lace on the rochet.

Owing to the fears aroused by the rather alarming dispositions of the French Government regarding Church property, the body was removed on January 3, 1907 to a suburb of Liége. The mortal remains of their Blessed Father were vigilantly guarded for twelve years in the Chapel of the Daughters of Charity at Ans. In 1914, when the forts of the city were attacked by the German army, the Sisters trembled for their treasure, but no ill befell it. The holy relics were removed to Paris on April 12, 1919, but the body was not placed in the shrine until April 9 of the following year ; in the meantime, the reliquary was transformed and the vestments and cushion renewed. As in former days, twenty lamps are now kept constantly burning before the body of the Servant of God to symbolise the prayers that ascend towards their holy founder from all the provinces of the Congregation of the Mission, but to-day there are not only twenty-one, but thirty-six provinces of the Institute, and this multiplication is a proof of Saint Vincent's protection of his children.

So far we have given the history of the body, but the heart has also a story of its own which we shall now proceed to relate.

Abelly tells us that, in 1660, the heart of the great servant of the poor was enclosed in 'a small, silver vessel,' the gift of the Duchess of Aiguillon.⁸ A note written on parchment and subsequently discovered in the reliquary would lead one to believe that the embalming was defective, for it states : 'This heart made of wax contains all that could be preserved of the heart of M. Vincent, our Venerable Founder. And this said heart has been united to the dust from the same heart, July 1682.'9 Hence, twenty-two years after the Saint's death, the heart was not complete. In 1880, Doctor Renaut, Professor of Histology in the Catholic faculty of Lyons, divided the wax mould into two parts by a circular section made along a frontal cup. Within the valves a very clear imprint of a human heart was visible showing the ventricles, auricles and coronary vessels. The imprints made by the latter, and in the sunken space, on the wax, showed evident traces of blood from these vessels. 'If,' wrote the learned professor¹⁰ . . . 'a raised cast were taken, the exact form of the human heart which it contained would be reproduced, and the specimen is, in this respect, of considerable historical interest.

From 1682 to 1792, history tells us nothing about this

- ⁸ Op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. LII, p. 258. ⁹ Sachet, op cit., p. 80. ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 89.

relic except that it was preserved and venerated at Saint-Lazare. When the Congregation was dispersed, the relic was confided, together with a cassock and various articles of the Saint's clothing, to Father Siccardi, the Italian Assistant of the Superior General who was returning to Turin with another Assistant, Father Ferris, an Irishman, Father Bruni of the house at Mondovi, and four Sisters who had been sent to that city to found a new house. In order to conceal the relic, a hollow space was scooped out from the leaves of a large folio volume of the second book of Père Giry's Lives of the Saints, in the shape of a heart, and of the same size as the reliquary. The journey was long and difficult. The silver heart suffered so much from the jolting it received on the roads that when the Sisters removed it at Turin to place it on the altar of their little oratory, some particles became detached; these were piously collected, and placed in four small reliquaries. Father Siccardi had gone to Mondovi; when he returned, after three months, the Sisters gave him the heart, but not the detached particles which they were permitted to keep.

In 1796, when the French troops were threatening the city, the Sisters fled to Vienna, and later, for the same reason, to Bohemia, holding fast all the time to their reliquaries, which were still in their possession when they returned to Paris in 1801.

The reliquary of the Duchess of Aiguillon was handed over to a goldsmith at Turin for repairs, after which it was taken to the chapel of the Vincentians in that city and preserved with the heart of Saint Vincent. The people soon heard that the relic was in their midst and showed their confidence in it. Devotion to the relic was increased after the occurence of a striking incident, of which we have an official account. As the country was suffering from a prolonged drought, the idea occurred to someone to carry the heart in procession ; scarcely had they left the church than rain began to fall. The people hastened back, with loud and repeated cries of : 'A miracle ! A miracle !'

In 1796, Father Siccardi was transferred as Superior to Montecitorio; he handed over his treasure to a confrère, Father Bertholdi, who proved to be such a faithful custodian that when the Vicar General of the Congregation, Father Brunet, arrived from Rome at Turin to take possession of the sacred relic and bring it back to Paris, he had to go away empty-handed.¹¹

As soon as Cardinal Fesch, Archbishop of Lyons and the Emperor Napoleon's uncle, heard of this, he wrote, on January 1, 1805, to Mgr della Torre, Archbishop of Turin : 'As the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity have now been re-established, in my capacity of grand almoner of the Empire, I claim this relic. I beg you to have an official report in verification of its identity drawn up and then handed to General Menou who will have it sent to me. I have no doubt that Father Bertholdi, the custodian of this relic, will display an active zeal for its restitution. I shall not, however, forget that we owe its preservation to Father Bertholdi.'12 Cardinal Fesch was not aware that Father Bertholdi had died in the previous November. The tone of the letter admitted of no reply, as Mgr della Torre fully realised, but to lessen the extent of his sacrifice, he detached a ventricle which is still venerated in the Chapel of the Vincentian Fathers at Turin.

When he had done so, the reliquary was replaced in Père Giry's second volume and, together with the official report, handed over to General Menou. During the journey, it was again damaged ; a fissure appeared, which, after its arrival, was sealed by the Bishop of Versailles, and probably some more particles became detached.

Cardinal Fesch, in his letter to the Archbishop of Turin, had referred to the duty of restitution, but when the relic was in his own possession, thinking no doubt that the Emperor's uncle was not bound by the same code of laws, he handed it over to his primatial church. As long as Napoleon was Master of France, protestation was useless and even dangerous, and so Father Hanon, the Vicar General, waited impatiently for a favourable opportunity. After the fall of the Empire, he wrote to Father Siccardi : 'I know, in a general way, that you took and deposited (the heart) at Turin, and that Cardinal Fesch had it forcibly

¹¹ Letter of M. Viguier to M. Vicherat, November 19, 1804 (Arch. de la Mission). ¹² Sachet, op. cit., p. 38. removed and taken to Lyons where it is now preserved behind an iron grille. I have claimed it; they could not refuse to recognise our right and have promised to give it up. Nevertheless, as we should be ready for every eventuality, it is essential that you should give, or let me have as soon as possible, the fullest details regarding the removal of the holy relic to Turin and of all that happened in those places. . . . Moreover, do all in your power to induce the Holy Father to command (mention the matter to their Eminences Pacca, di Pietro, etc, etc.) Cardinal Fesch to give us back this holy relic to which he has not the slightest right. In any case, I hope we shall obtain it.'¹³ This letter is dated May 21, 1814. In October, Father Hanon travelled to Lyons, provided with all the necessary documents, only to learn once more that right can avail nothing against might.

The city of Lyons held high festival for the reception of the relic; the reliquary itself was placed in the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, until a Chapel for relics was built in accordance with the plans of Cardinal Fesch who had already purchased eleven magnificent pillars for it. His death put an end to these preparations, and for long afterwards, the relic remained in the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, restored by Cardinal de Bonald.

In 1822, owing to the clumsiness of the officiating priest who was presenting the heart for the veneration of the Chapter, the reliquary fell and was broken, and the relic itself fractured. The deacon gathered up the fragments; some particles had fallen off and he was presented with them. In 1862, his brother gave the Sisters of Saint John one of the particles, which is still preserved in their domestic oratory. In 1859, Cardinal de Bonald ordered from Rome a magnificent silver-gilt reliquary with four lapis lazuli pillars in which he intended to place the heart, and the relic was at once removed from the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre to its new shrine. In future, the faithful had, as a rule, to be content with the silver reliquary of the Duchess of Aiguillon, containing particles of the Saint's heart, and the wax-mould. Shortly afterwards, the custodians of the treasure had a great shock; the relic was beginning to disintegrate; they at

¹³ Arch. de la Mission.

VOL. 111.-2 G

once proceeded to coat it with a layer of gum-lake perfumed with musk and frankincense. When this operation was completed, the heart was placed in a reticule of cloth-ofgold passementerie which served to maintain the cohesion, and then enclosed in a crystal which was inserted in the new reliquary.

In 1888, there was another shock when the surface of the relic began to assume a musty appearance. The chapter appointed a commission consisting of a physician, a chemist and a goldsmith to consult on the best means of preserving their treasure. The muscular tissue was stretched on a wooden mould and freed from the parasites that were injuring it; the surface was disinfected and immediately covered with a protective envelope of sterilised paraffin. It took several days to finish this work, and then a new silver-gilt reliquary was ordered. Each of the commissioners received a reward; one was presented with the thin gold band that surrounded the relic since 1859, and each of the others with a particle of the heart.

The presence of Saint Vincent's heart in Lyons has rendered this great Saint very dear to the hearts of the faithful in that city; the relic is exposed for their veneration on his feast-day, which is celebrated in Lyons with great devotion, and on November 5, the Feast of all holy relics.

From 1817 to 1856, the ecclesiastical retreat concluded, when time permitted, with a touching ceremony; at seven o'clock in the morning all the priests walked in procession from the Seminary to the primatial Church to renew, before the heart, their ecclesiastical promises; and then, still in processional order, they went to Fourvière to consecrate themselves to the Mother of God. They returned to the Seminary about midday. The procession to Saint-John ceased when the Seminary was moved to Saint-Just, and the visit to Fourvière came to an end when the seminarists, drawn from Saint-Just, went to reside at Sainte-Foy.

Few cities know as well as Lyons how to combine sacrifice and devotedness; it has given proofs of both throughout the centuries by its alms-giving, charitable institutions, and the sanctity and heroism of its children. Many of them, no doubt, felt these noble aspirations rise in their

hearts as they knelt in prayer before that of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Relics were multiplied not only by utilising particles that had become detached from the heart;¹⁴ their number was considerably increased by making use of minute portions of the Saint's flesh, blood, bones and clothing.

In 1730, three lay-brother surgeons, with the authorisation of the Archbishop of Paris, separated the flesh from the bones by the action of boiling water ; with this they combined dust from the bones and then made a compost by means of the purest oil obtainable, from which medallions, five centimetres in diameter and bearing a portrait of Saint Vincent in relief, were struck. Some of these were distributed amongst houses of the Priests of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, communities especially devoted to Saint Vincent, such as the Visitation Nuns at Mans, several hospitals, some Cathedral Chapters such as Amiens, and certain distinguished personages.¹⁵

After the Beatification, the blood was removed from the heart and viscera and linen-cloths dipped in it, which were also distributed amongst persons of rank, such as Benedict XIII, Clement XII, the Queen of England, wife of George II, and some others. The shirt dipped in the Saint's blood was given to Benedict XIII who presented it to the treasury of his old see at Benevento.¹⁶ There were

¹⁴ Two small fragments of the heart are preserved in the sacristy at 95 Rue de Sèvres ; one, at the Berceau and one at the Sisters of Saint John, Lyons. There are others in various places, for Sachet states (*op. cit.*, p. 87) that M. Chapot, the custodian of the relics at Lyons, collected a large number of small particles of the heart and then lavishly distributed them, ' the particles were all of the same kind and appearance, namely, like red spots on cotton.'

¹⁵ Amongst places or establishments which possess some to-day we may mention, Le Berceau, Buglose, Folleville, the Churches of Saint Eustache, Paris, and of Longpont, near Montlhéry, the Cathedral of Agnani (Italy), the Hôtels-Dieu at Versailles and Toulouse and the Chapel of the Hospice des Menages, Issy.

¹⁶ Four pieces of linen-cloth and two small pieces of linen dipped in blood are preserved at the Leonine College, Rome, which is under the charge of the Vincentian Fathers. also some portrait-relics, on which a heart, held breast-high in the hand, was painted with diluted blood; in some of these relics, flames rise from the heart.¹⁷

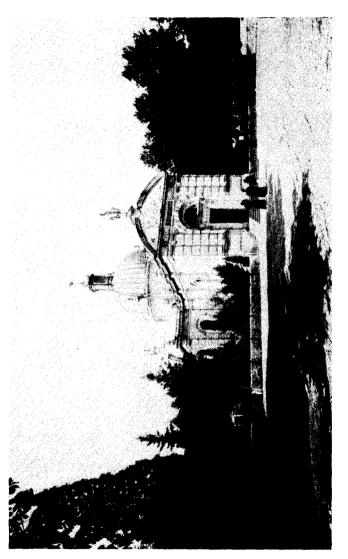
To satisfy the devotion of the faithful, some of the bones of the skeleton were also removed; at the present day, eleven ribs, the radius of the right hand, the left hand, the two patellas and the ossicles are missing. The first mutilation goes back to September 25, 1729, when the phalanges and the three first bones of the metacarpus of the left hand were detached. Amongst those who received portions of these relics we may mention Benedict XIII, the Duc de Noailles, the Princesse d'Armagnac, the Maréchale de Gramont, the Marquise de Rhodes and Mademoiselle de Beauveau.¹⁸ On December 31, 1729, a small bone was sent to Cardinal Fleury, the Prime Minister, a rib and a short-rib to the Mother-House of the Daughters of Charity, and the teeth to Father Bonnet, Superior General, at whose request they were replaced in their natural position. On October 31, 1730, he received in exchange some small bones and portion of the flesh.

When Vincent de Paul was canonised, there was another distribution of relics; Clement XIII received a bone from Father Couty, Superior General, and so did the Chapter of Amiens; the Bishop of Amiens was given a phalange, and the house at Montmirail a bone from one of the fingers. Such was the generosity of the Superior General that in the course of the seventeenth century, ten other ribs disappeared, divided into fragments.¹⁹ In 1817, the patella of the right knee was removed and presented to Mgr

¹⁷ Three image-relics may be seen in the Hall of Relics, 95 Rue de Sèvres, and one in the Church of Saint Eustache, Paris.

¹⁸ The seminary of Issy, near Paris, possesses two phalanges.

¹⁹ At the present day, part of a rib is preserved at the Mother House of the Priests of the Mission ; another at the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity ; a third in the Chapel at the Berceau ; a fourth, at the Missionaries' Leonine College, Rome ; a fifth, at Turin ; a whole rib, or so it is claimed, at Troyes ; small fragments at Saint Etienne du Mont, Paris ; at Longpont, Saint-Saturnin at Toulouse and Folleville. Notre-Dame, Paris, had a rib before 1792.



CHAPEL AT THE BIRTH-PLACE OF S. VINCENT

Dubourg, at that time Bishop of New Orleans, and later Bishop of Montauban. In 1830, the skeleton was deprived of the radius of the right arm and the left patella; the recipients have been mentioned above. The Mother-House of the Daughters of Charity fared best, as it had the lower part of the radius. At that time a few Sisters possessed some silver plate, a gift from their families, which, at Father Etienne's request, they presented to the community, and by this means, a beautiful silver shrine, in the shape of a small Gothic edifice, was procured from a goldsmith and may now be seen in the chapel of the Sisters, 140 Rue du Bac.

Various articles used by Saint Vincent also constitute relics, and a large number of them may be seen in a special room at 95 Rue de Sèvres. The following is a list : A cassock of rough material, now almost devoid of buttons; a quarter of the lower portion cannot be opened, as there are no button-holes; a portion of this cassock has been removed.

A large cloak, better preserved than the cassock.

Three shoes in the shape of sandals; they have hardly been used, but some pious hand has cut off a piece of leather from one of them.

Portion of a stocking.

A hair girdle, almost complete.

A woven hair-shirt, half of hair and half of rough linen cloth, in a good state of preservation.

Linen used to dress sores on the legs.

A sponge used in washing the body after death.

Portions of the clothes in which Saint Vincent was buried in 1660.

A small piece of linen that had touched the bones when the coffin was opened.

Bed-curtains of coarse, grey material, slightly moth-eaten. A small piece of straw-matting.

A candle-stick.

An umbrella made of waxed cloth, now almost fallen to pieces, of which a large section is missing.

An alb.

A chasuble made of white damask with a cross embroidered in tapestry; in the centre, a portrait of Saint Geneviève, the patroness of Paris. Saint Vincent possibly wore this chasuble in the Church at Gentilly.

A red, damask stole, possibly used by Saint Vincent when administering the sacraments in the Church at Folleville.

Another preaching stole of cloth-of-gold with tassels and fringes of fine silver; the body of the Saint was clothed with this vestment in the shrine of the church at Saint-Lazare.

Altar-cards of vellum, with miniatures in the shape of triptychs, ornamented with velvet, delicate tassels and cut glass. As the velvet and tassels had decayed, they were replaced, in 1858, by replicas.

The altar-stone on which Saint Vincent may have celebrated Mass in the Chapel of Our Lady of Varenne, in the hamlet of Fréneville, in the parish of Valpuiseaux.

A wooden cross bearing a small, bronze figure of Christ, which was in his room.

The processional cross given by Saint Vincent to the Missionaries sent to Tunis.

The rosary that hung at his girdle; a simple piece of cord on which six decades of wooden beads are strung. It is now arranged in the form of a heart within a gilt frame and sealed with the seal of the Congregation. This rosary formerly in Saint-Lazare, was taken to Rome by Father Cayla in 1794; afterwards it became the property of a Sister of Charity, then of James Perboyre, Superior of the Seminary at Montauban, and finally, of his nephew, Gabriel Perboyre.

A breviary in two volumes octavo, dated 1656. M. de Saint-Jean, almoner to the Queen, made a present of this breviary to Father Caze, Priest of the Mission, on March 15, 1664. In 1751, it formed part of the library of the 'great' seminary at Sens. Confiscated by the municipal authorities during the Revolution, it was given to M. Montault, Vicar General of Sens on January 12, 1793. Stephen Macé, a municipal official, subsequently had it in his possession, and his heirs bequeathed it, in 1802 or earlier, to M. Tarbé who had the binding altered. In 1849, it was put up for sale by a bookseller of Sens, purchased by Mother Mazin, Superioress of the Daughters of Charity, for 1500 francs and presented by her to Father Etienne, Superior General.

A picture inserted between the leaves of the breviary represents Our Lord on the Cross which is embraced by Mary Magdalen who is trembling with emotion. Lower down, souls are rising from Purgatory towards Our Saviour to obtain their deliverance, and finally comes a prayer : Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem sempiternam. On the back, is the following signed statement : 'Theodore de Nay, Councillor': 'There is nothing remarkable about this parchment picture unless that it belonged to Saint Vincent de Paul, the treasure of charity. It was found in his breviary at the moment of his death. This relic was given to me by my friend M. Planton, priest of the Congregation founded by Saint Vincent. This worthy ecclesiastic possessed some articles which he had received from a relative of Saint Vincent. M. Planton is from Villeneuve, not far from the village where Saint Vincent was born.'

Amongst the other relics are :

An iron knife with a gilt handle and a wooden sheath, on which some hieroglyphic marks are engraved.

An iron seal, of very simple pattern with a wooden handle, on which Our Lord is represented standing and sending His disciples to preach the Gospel.

A fragment of the wooden coffin.

A plaster cast of Saint Vincent's face after death.

The head of a statue of the Blessed Virgin, sent in 1860 from Marchais in Champagne, and not from Marchais in Picardy, as the inscription wrongly stated. This statue, which had become famous after a mission preached by Saint Vincent in that place and by the conversion of a heretic, was always deeply venerated in Marchais. During the Revolution, some madmen carried it into the open space before the church to mutilate it; the head was saved by one of the inhabitants.²⁰

The satchel that contained receipts for sums of money sent to the ruined provinces.

Are all these relics authentic? It would seem as if the

²⁰ Notice historique sur les reliques et souvenirs de Saint Vincent de Paul (Extract du Rosier de Marie), Paris, 1864, in-32, p. 12. authenticity of the breviary is beyond discussion, in view of all the autographic attestations it contains. It would be rash to pronounce in favour of the others; however, one may presume authenticity at least in the case of a large number, for it seems likely that they would not have been accepted as relics without some guarantee.

Apart from the articles collected in the 'Hall of Relics,' the house in Rue de Sèvres also possesses, as we have seen, the crucifix which is thought to have been used by Saint Vincent when assisting Louis XIII on his death-bed.

The Mother-House presented the birthplace of Saint Vincent with a certain number of relics. In a reliquary in the chapel there, one may see small portions of the bedcurtains, the stole, the cloak and the cassock; in the house at Ranquine, a pair of shoes; a piece of linen used to bandage the legs; a piece of the vestments found in the coffin, a piece of a leather girdle and a small portion of the sponge used to wash the body.

Cardinal de Bonald purchased for the primatial Church of Lyons, at a cost of 1800 francs, a magnificent chasuble embroidered by the Ladies of the Court and presented by Louis XIII to Saint Vincent. The green silk has since been replaced by black velvet beautifully embroidered with silver; at the present day, this splendid vestment is used at the funerals of Archbishops.²¹

The Daughters of Charity of Saint John preserve in their house the volume in which the heart was placed when taken from Paris to Turin.

In Italy, several houses of the Priests of the Mission possess excellent relics of the holy founder.

At Florence, one may see the walking-stick on which he supported himself in his old age ; it was given, on January 20, 1704, by Father Watel, Superior General, to Cosimo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, who had a great devotion to Saint Vincent.

Rome and Turin are even better off.

At Turin are preserved the cassock worn by the Saint when he died, a large cloak, a summer-cloak, a long jacket, a pair of trousers, a linen shirt, a closely-fitting linen tunic,

²¹ Sachet, op. cit., p. 82.

another tunic of the same kind open at the lower end, a pair of stockings, a pair of shirt-sleeves, a cloth girdle from which are suspended five skin money-bags, six rolls of bandages, eleven pieces of linen, five small packets of bandages stained with pus, the remains of the clothes found in the coffin at the first official indentification of the body.²²

At Rome, there is a skull-cap and three rolls of white linen taken from one or more shirts.

Many other relics have disappeared, and no one knows what has become of them. The custodians of the 'Hall of Relics' have not always fulfilled their duties with equal conscientiousness. On October 20, 1741, Father Cossart, Procurator General of the Congregation of the Mission at Rome, complained bitterly in a letter to his confrère, Father Gandon, of the excessive liberality of one of the General's Assistants, Father Viganego: 'In regard to Saint Vincent's relics, I may tell you that our Italian confrères are no less well supplied with them than we French are. One individual has devoutly wasted as much of them as he could. I know a person who has a girdle, a collar and the little steel box in which the Saint put the profession of faith which he wore over his heart. Father Viganego, who was in charge of the room containing the Saint's relics, gave some to a large number of people and I think he is still able to furnish a whole province with letters and rare documents. Several persons had even been given fragments of bones.'23

Such regrettable liberality has long since ceased; to disperse is to lose, and what has been given to private individuals ends by falling into the hands of persons who do not understand the value of the gifts or the duty of preserving them.

²² Le relicue del cuore e degli indumenti di S. Vincenzo in Missioni Estere Vincenziane, August 1, 1930, pp. 169 and foll.

²³ Archives of the Mission.

CHAPTER LXVIII

SAINT VINCENT'S PLACE IN THE LITURGY

THE faithful had not waited for August 13, 1729, the day on which Vincent de Paul was beatified, to honour and pray to him. But their devotion could not be manifested in the solemn forms which the Church reserves for those of her children whose holiness is officially recognised. After the Beatification, it was lawful to expose his relics for the veneration of the faithful, to place a halo round his head in portraits, to recite his office and to celebrate his Mass every year on September 27, in certain fixed places.

The Priests of the Mission were accorded certain privileges; not only did their churches and chapels enjoy the last-mentioned favour, but Rome granted them an octave and permission to celebrate a votive Mass of their founder on days when such Masses may be said ; they could,¹ moreover, in virtue of a privilege granted in 1766, celebrate a Mass in honour of Saint Vincent once a week according to the rites of a semi-double feast, on any day that was otherwise free.

In the eighteenth century, September 27 fell within the period of summer vacation; this was a drawback as far as numerous seminaries in charge of the Vincentian Fathers were concerned, for to shorten the vacation would not tend to make the newly beatified popular with seminarists. A petition to transfer the feast was presented to Rome, and July 19 was the date selected ;² it was not then

¹ Acta apostolica in gratiam Congregationis Missionis, Parisiis

1876, in-4°, p. 225. ² Recueil des principales circulaires des superieurs généraux de la Congrégation de la Mission, Paris, 1877-1880, 3 vol., in-4º, t. I, p. 464.

anticipated that the summer vacation would encroach on August, absorb it, and, continuing its triumphant progress, embrace the last days of June.

Scarcely had Vincent de Paul been beatified than offices in his honour began to appear almost everywhere; each house of the Vincentians, or almost each, had its own. In Paris greater haste was displayed than anywhere else, for in 1720 a Parisian bookseller published, with the approbation of the Archbishop, a Mass and Vespers of the Blessed Vincent de Paul³ composed, it was said, by John Richon, one of the Superior General's assistants.⁴ Uniformity was preferable to this strange variety. Father Couty would not have been displeased if the Paris office was adopted in the provinces, but if this was to be done, the consent of the bishops was required, for without their approbation the office could not be employed. He had recourse to Rome, but the Congregation of Rites did not care much for the Parisian text, and on its refusal to approve it, the Pope was approached; the Holy Father examined the office himself and dictated alterations to his private secretary. These alterations were so considerable that nothing of the primitive text remained but the hymns and the prose, which had also been considerably changed.⁵

Clement XII's revision was conveyed to Paris in a private letter,⁶ dated April 14, 1739. It was understood that all was now ready, but two years elapsed before the definitive text of the office⁷ was approved on April 20, 1741. It was sent to the printer, and Paris at last received copies some time in June. Father Couty, Superior General, hastened to send good news to his confrères : 'We had ardently longed for this office, and many have frequently

³ Office pour la feste du Bienheureux Vincent de Paul à la messe et à vespres selon l'usage du diocèse de Paris, Paris, 1729, in-12.

⁴ Ulysse Chevalier, Poésie liturgique des Églises de France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, ou Recueil d'hymnes et de proses usitées à cette époque, Paris, 1913, in-8°, p. 177.

⁵ Letter from the Procurator of the Mission to the Holy See to Father Lamy, Assistant. (Archives of the house at Rome.)

⁶ Acta, p. 221.

⁷ Recueil des principales circulaires, t. I, p. 484.

asked us for it, but we should never have dared to hope that the Holy Father himself, amidst his multifarious duties, would have deigned to work at it. . . . Hence, I feel quite certain that those of our families who have, in the meantime, composed or caused to be composed offices in honour of our holy founder, will leave them aside as soon as they have received this; and although I have no reason to doubt of your good dispositions in this respect, nevertheless, that I may be certain of perfect uniformity in the matter . . . I request Superiors to inform me of the execution of what I have just recommended.'⁸

The feast of Saint Vincent, at that time a semi-double for the Universal Church, was raised to the rank of a double on May 12, 1753.⁹

September 27, however, which had had to yield place to July 19, commemorated an important event of which the liturgy made no mention, and hence there was a void to be filled. The Sacred Congregation of Rites appreciated the fact, and therefore authorised¹⁰ the Priests of the Mission, on June 15, 1822, to celebrate annually the feast of the death of their holy Founder with the rite of a double-major on September 27.

Fourteen years later, a third annual feast was added, that of the Translation of the Relics,¹¹ and hence the glorious April 25, 1830, was commemorated in the liturgy. The day selected was April 26, but in 1850 this was altered to the Second Sunday after Easter. After the reform of Pius X, the feast reverted in 1911 to its original date, and then, in 1913, to the 27th ; lastly, driven from its position by a new Doctor of the Church, Saint Peter Canisius, it was fixed for the 20th. The rite has also changed ; raised to a feast of the second class in 1912, it became once again a double-major in 1913.¹²

Spring, Summer, and Autumn had each now a feast of Saint Vincent, and the Superior General, Father Fiat, was unhappy to see Winter left out in the cold. He set

⁸ Acta, p. 222. ⁹ Ibid., p. 236. ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 242.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 244, 258, 269; Annales, 1905, p. 124; 1914, p. 305.

¹² Annales, 1913, p. 113 ; 1914, p. 305.

about searching for a new feast, and was fortunate enough to discover one.

When Leo XIII declared Saint Thomas Aquinas patron of Catholic Schools and Universities, Father Fiat called to mind a passage from a splendid panegyric preached by Mgr Freppel: 'Saint Vincent,' said the orator, 'did for charity in the seventeenth century what the Angelic Doctor had done for the science of faith in the thirteenth . . . he has been the Thomas Aquinas of charity. It is the mark of his work and the object of his mission. Yes, he too, this great and simple man, was endowed with a genius for organisation, and like Thomas Aquinas, he has bequeathed to the Christian world his own Summa, a magnificent Summa, the Summa of his labours.' As this was so, thought Father Fiat, had not Saint Vincent, in the order of charity, the same rights of patronage as the great Angelic Doctor in the order of theological science. This thought was obsessing him when he learned that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was preparing to celebrate the golden jubilee of its foundation. This seemed to him to be a favourable occasion and he went to confide his project to the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Guibert, who, delighted with the idea, promised to take all the necessary steps.

The Cardinal, out of prudence, unofficially sounded the authorities at Rome as to whether there was any likelihood of the favour being granted. The reply was in the affirmative, provided the request was confined to France. Cardinal Guibert then proceeded to interest the French hierarchy in the scheme; he sent the text of a petition to each of the bishops, which they unanimously signed. Superiors General united their voices with those of the episcopate. Father Fiat was especially touched by the support given by some; Father Becks, for instance, Superior General of the Jesuits, wrote to him on March 29, 1883: 'I have just learned of the steps taken by the French hierarchy to have SaintVincent de Paul proclaimed patron of all works of charity. I wish to join my own humble prayer with theirs because this idea of grouping under the patronage of a great saint all devoted efforts in favour of the suffering classes seems to be something providential in the actual state of society.'

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was, in the meantime, preparing for its golden jubilee. At two o'clock on May 8, 1883, a meeting was held in the assembly hall of the Catholic Institute. As the Cardinal was not expected to attend, all were surprised to see him enter; he came because he had just received a despatch from Cardinal Bartolini, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which he proceeded to read. 'I am happy to be able to inform Your Eminence by a telegram that the Holy Father, without referring the matter to a special Congregation, acting on the report submitted to him in audience, has graciously acceded to the desire expressed in your postulatory letter and in those of the Right Reverend Bishops by declaring that the illustrious benefactor of humanity, Saint Vincent de Paul, shall be recognised and venerated throughout all France as patron of all pious associations and works of Christian charity. I have hastened to inform Your Eminence so that you might be able to announce to the representatives of this association now assembled in Paris, this solemn act by which the Holy See crowns with a new aureola of glory this hero of charity, this luminous star of sanctity who shines over France and the whole Catholic world. In a few days, Your Right Reverend Eminence will receive the decree in the form of an Apostolic Brief which His Holiness has given orders to have expedited so that the favour accorded may be at once carried out.'

The Sacred Congregation of Rites had given its decision on April 26; it was confirmed, on June 22, by a Brief containing a magnificent eulogy of Saint Vincent, 'the most popular hero of charity.' 'Yielding to the wishes of all and desiring to arouse the devotion of the faithful for this hero of charity,' wrote the Pope in conclusion, 'we declare and institute by these presents Saint Vincent de Paul special patron with God of all charitable associations which in any degree whatsoever emanate from him and are to be found in French territory.'¹³ Solemn triduums

¹³ Saint Vincent de Paul déclaré par le Saint-Siège patron spécial de toutes les associations de charité en France dans les Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1883, pp. 413-443; Circulaires du P. Fiat, circulaire du 30 Août 1883.

followed this pronouncement in every diocese of France, and the name of the new patron was everywhere acclaimed. Despite all this, Father Fiat was not quite happy; his ambition had been only half fulfilled and he was not a man to rest content with a partial success. France, no doubt, was something to be thankful for, but Saint Vincent de Paul's charity extended far beyond its confines and Father Fiat thought this great saint deserved something even better. Yet, after all, it was a first step, and he saw no reason why he should not take another. On November 12, 1883, he addressed a letter to the bishops of the whole world enclosing a copy of a petition; both letter and petition received a warm welcome everywhere. The petition from Ireland was the first to arrive, and on February 14, 1884, Rome replied to it by extending the patronage to that country, which had always been so dear to the heart of Saint Vincent de Paul.¹⁴ Shortly afterwards, the Holy See, faced with a flood of petitions, realised that there could no longer be a question of separate decrees and that the moment had come for considering a universal patronage. In 1885 the question was submitted for consideration, and on April 16 it was decided favourably by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites which was followed, on May 12, by a Brief of Pope Leo XIII.¹⁵

If Father Fiat's plan was to be realised in its entirety, there were two further favours to be granted : the insertion of the new title in the Breviary and Martyrology, and the establishment of a special feast. The first, ¹⁶ was obtained on June 23, 1894, and the second, ¹⁷ on September 7, 1903. So by twenty years of patient diplomacy, Saint Vincent's unwearied successor had triumphed over all difficulties; thanks to his efforts, another jewel had been added to the crown of the Founder of the Mission.

This account of the liturgical feasts enables us to see all

¹⁴ Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1884, p. 339.

¹⁵ Extension du patronage de Saint Vincent dans les Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1885, pp. 321-340; Circulaires du P. Fiat, circulaire du 13 Juin 1885.

¹⁶ Annales, 1894, p. 457.

¹⁷ Ibid., 1904. p. 5.

that the Church, after the great acts of Beatification and Canonisation, has done to honour one of the greatest of her children. We shall now consider the faithful and see how they replied to her invitation.

Devotion to Saint Vincent developed in a special manner in those places with which he had been connected during his lifetime, such as Pouy, Château-l'Évêque, Clichy, Folleville, Châtillon-les-Dombes and Paris.

The pilgrim who, in the course of the last years of the seventeenth century, wended his way to Our Lady of Buglose, completed his devotions by paying a visit to the spot where Saint Vincent was born and there invoked his protection. The old farm-house was no longer in existence; on its site rose a little oratory where the room in which he was born had once stood, and a large wooden cross hacked by the knives of those who would not go home without a souvenir. The oratory contained a picture representing M. Vincent kneeling before Our Lady of Buglose, the Patroness of the locality; one of its walls abutted on a new house, called Ranquine, inhabited by the de Paul family ever since their former residence had crumbled away.

When Vincent was beatified, this little chapel became dearer than ever to the faithful, and Father Mauriol, Superior of the Missionaries at Buglose and parish priest of Pouy, solemnly blessed it on May 30, 1730. The people of the village, whose numbers were swelled by crowds of pilgrims from places in the neighbourhood, walked there in procession from the parish church, and when the ceremony of the blessing was over and Mass had been celebrated, they returned in the same order to the church. This first Mass was followed by many others, for it was a great joy to the Missionaries to be able to offer up the Holy Sacrifice on the spot where their Founder was born.

The little building, a very modest one for a Beatified holy Founder, seemed even more modest when he was canonised. In 1750, it was replaced by a chapel, six and a half metres long by four metres and a half wide, erected about twelve metres distant from the house at Ranquine. The new sanctuary was dominated by a wooden campanile surmounted by a wooden cross; it was furnished with an altar surrounded by an iron balustrade that served as a Communion rail, and two small presses set into the wall. It contained two pictures, one of which had been removed from the former little oratory already referred to, and the other representing Vincent as a child in the midst of his flock, pouring his thirty sous into a beggarman's wallet.

Not only were prayers offered to Saint Vincent in this chapel; a mother brought him, or rather abandoned to him, her fortnight-old baby; it was taken in and baptised Vincent.

Then came the French Revolution; the building was declared national property and sold, some years later, for 3000 livres.¹⁸

When these troubled times had passed, the civil authorities of the Department began to form grandiose plans; they spoke of a pilgrimage to be placed in charge of the Priests of the Mission, of a colony for the needy, of a hospice for incurables, of a memorial church which was also to serve for the parish, of an artistic railing round the ancient oak and of a beautiful avenue of four lines of trees leading from Buglose to Ranquine. In 1820, the Departmental architect drew up plans for a main block with a courtyard, a circular chapel, a residence for the curate and the superior of the establishment, dormitories for the Sisters and for the sick, refectories and a grand vestibule. The bishop of the diocese was thinking of the children. 'Why not,' he wrote to the Prefect on July 29, 1829, 'set up an institution to which a large number of foundlings could be admitted to be educated and taught trades, and establish, for instance, a sort of nursery for good domestic servants of both sexes?'

Plans were produced more rapidly than money. It proved almost useless to make collections in the neighbourhood and to utilise the passage of princes and princesses of the royal family through Pouy or Dax to ask for subscriptions; all the money that came in was far from reaching the amount expected.

¹⁸ Histoire de la maison de Ranquine avant le XIX^e siècle, par P. Coste dans le Bulletin de la Société de Borda, 1906, pp. 333-349.

VOL. III.-2 H

A national subscription was mooted, and the idea was taken up in 1823 by the Prefect, the Sub-Prefect and the General Council. A commission was established under the presidency of the Prefect to set a subscription list on foot; the Duchesse d'Angoulême allowed her name to head it; great efforts were made, but purses still remained closed. The administrative commission grew discouraged and resolved to dissolve; at its last meeting, held on May 7, 1849, it declared that it handed the matter over 'entirely to the pious and enlightened zeal of His Lordship the Bishop of Aire so that the place where Vincent de Paul was born may at length be made known to posterity by a monument worthy of this great Saint.'

Mgr Lanneluc was guite well aware of the difficulties that faced him; others would have been frightened, but he was a courageous and optimistic man. His first steps were the appointment of an ecclesiastical commission, of which Father Etienne, the Superior General, became a member, a request for a Brief from Pius IX, and the publication of a pastoral. The Brief and pastoral were widely distributed. Dupin, President of the Legislative Assembly, wrote to acknowledge the copy he had received : 'There is no saint in the Church more popular than Saint Vincent, for he is the apostle of charity, the most democratic of all virtues. I have no doubt of the success of an undertaking the object of which is to raise a monument in his honour. I have deposited your pastoral on the table of the Conference Hall so that the representatives may be able to see it.' In a short time, the Commission had 61,000 francs in the bank, and with this sum in hand it was able to begin building. for they rightly believed that the best way to attract support was to make a start.

On August 6, 1851, the first stone of the chapel was laid in presence of 5000 people. In the afternoon, the members of the Commission adopted the plans prepared by Gallois, a Parisian architect, agreed to the demolition of the old one which encroached by about three metres on the site of the new building, and voted in favour of a national lottery with a capital of 500,000 francs. We shall not deal here with the numerous difficulties which they encountered and which would have discouraged many another : lawsuits, debts and administrative obstacles. The lottery, negatived at first by the Minister of the Interior and then by the Emperor, was at length authorised on May 4, 1858, owing to the efforts of M. Cornau, formerly Prefect of the Landes and now Secretary General to the Minister of the Interior. Of the 500,000 francs which it brought in more than 350,000 were absorbed in the completion of the Chapel and the building of a hospice. On April 24, 1864, the day of the opening ceremony, the members of the Commission enjoyed the fruits of their persevering efforts. Never had such a celebration been seen in all that country-side; it was witnessed by representatives from the Ministry of Public Worship, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the General in charge of the district, the Prefect, and three Sub-Prefects of the Department, a Cardinal, twelve Bishops, 1500 members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, 800 Sisters of Charity, 100 Priests of the Mission, from 400 to 500 ecclesiastics, almost 40,000 persons in all.19

The 'Berceau,' as it was called, had been twelve years in existence on April 24, 1876. In those days, it was believed that the glorious son of Pouy had been born on April 26, 1576, and great pilgrimages and splendid manifestations of piety, worthy of him whose glory was being celebrated, crowned the occasion.

At the present day, the name of Pouy (Landes) has disappeared from the list of communes and has been replaced by that of Saint Vincent de Paul. In the village the 'Berceau' forms the most important group of buildings ; it is under the direction of two Communities, the Priests of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity ; two orphanages, one for boys, the other for girls ; two hospices, one for men, the other for women ; workshops, and a preparatory seminary in which hundreds of secular priests and missionaries have been trained. There is also, apart from the buildings that shelter this little colony, a fine chapel in the Renaissance style under whose dome they meet for

¹⁹ Le Berceau de Saint Vincent de Paul dans la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, par P. Coste dans le Bulletin de la Société de Borda, 1914, pp. 97-116; 169-184. worship on Sundays and holy-days; an ancient oak protected by a railing from the depredations of men, but not, unfortunately, from 'Time's fell hand,' and lastly, the house of Ranquine, long regarded as the house in which Saint Vincent was born, and on that account transformed into a chapel and enriched by some valuable relics presented by the Mother-House in Paris.

Saint Vincent is also honoured at Château-l'Évêque, where he was ordained priest on September 23, 1600, in the Bishop's Chapel, which now bears his name in addition to that of its former patron, Saint Julian. The Sisters of Charity have erected close at hand a large house for Sisters who have grown old or infirm. Château-l'Évêque did not forget, on September 23, 1900, the young man who three hundred years previously had received the sacerdotal character from the hands of Francis de Bourdeilles, Bishop of Périgueux, for nowhere, perhaps, was the third centenary of his ordination more brilliantly celebrated.

Clichy, near Paris, is another centre of devotion to our saint, and here, too, is a house for Sisters of Charity who have earned their repose. The parish is under the patronage of its former rector; the church which he built still stands, though surrounded by a new one in which stained-glass windows recall several scenes in his life.

In the church at Folleville (Somme), the pulpit is still piously preserved in which he preached his famous sermon on January 25, 1617, which was, to use his own expression, the first sermon of the Mission. A training-school for lay-brothers has recently been established here and has already given excellent results.

Châtillon-les-Dombes, where the first Confraternity of Charity was erected, has always been mindful of its former pastor. Some relics were sent to it from Paris shortly after the Canonisation; during the great Revolution, a woman concealed them in her home to prevent them from being burned on the public square. Cardinal Fesch recognised their authenticity on his first visit to Châtillon.

The devotion to their saint and pastor, who had now become the second patron of the parish, resumed its oldtime splendour. A bronze statue of Saint Vincent, the

work of a famous sculptor, Emilien Cabuchet, a native of Bresse, was unveiled in 1856, in one of the public squares of the city. For many years an annual procession to the square was held on his feast-day after Vespers had been sung; the continuation of his panegyric, begun at the morning service, was then completed, and all returned to the church to venerate his relics. In 1882, a house of Daughters of Charity was opened in the parish. When M. Gojon was appointed parish priest of Châtillon, the Bishop of Belley, Mgr Richard, said to him : 'If you bring the cornette of a Sister of Charity to Châtillon, I promise you a beautiful set of vestments. Either through the door or the window, just as you please, but do bring the Daughters of Saint Vincent de Paul to your town.' When the old presbytery of 1617, which had long been turned to other uses, was put up for sale in 1878, Gojon was anxious to purchase it, but as he had no funds, he paid a visit to Sister Derieux, Superioress of the Military Hospital at Lyons. When he told her of his idea, she said : 'But have you money to purchase the house?'--' Money! Sister,' he replied, 'if I had money, I should not be here, so there is no use in thinking about it.' However, he did think about it, and wrote to the Superior General who supplied the funds. Not only was the presbytery purchased, but also the adjoining house in which the Canons of the Collegiate Church had once resided. This was repaired, and on September 24, 1882, the new home for the Sisters was blessed by the Bishop of Belley, in presence of the Superior General of the Vincentian Fathers and the Daughters of Charity.

The chapel contains its own little treasure, for here, in two reliquaries, are two autographs of Saint Vincent; one, the rules for the Confraternity of Charity of Châtillon and the other, a few pages from the parish registers bearing his signature. A painting by Canon Taconnet represents the Saint surrounded by Ladies of Charity in whose presence he hands to Mademoiselle de la Chassaigne the first set of rules of the Association.

The parish church also recalls the memory of its former pastor by a chapel dedicated to him, by stained-glass windows, two pictures and a statue presented by Father Boré, Superior General. On a wall on the epistle side of the nave is a large marble tablet bearing this inscription :

St. Vincent de Paul 2nd Patron 1617 When leaving his dear parishioners of Châtillon He assures them that they will always be present to him before God.²⁰

Nowhere is devotion to Saint Vincent more living than in the chapel of the Mother-House of the Congregation of the Mission where his body reposes; this is easily understood, for here we have not merely a simple souvenir of the past to arouse the devotion of the faithful, but his permanent presence. This, however, brings us back to the devotion shown to his relics of which we have treated in another chapter. Hence we shall not dwell upon it here; nor for the same reason, on the homage paid to Saint Vincent in the Cathedral at Lyons where his heart is devoutly preserved.

If we had any desire to deal with this vast subject in detail, we should also have to treat of Saint Vincent, eulogised by panegyrists, portrayed by painters and sculptors, and sung by poets and musicians; we should have to enumerate the associations, churches, localities, hospitals, hospices and even masonic lodges which, by taking his name, have placed themselves under his protection; we should have to recall the prayers addressed to him : collects, litanies, hymns and canticles; the indulgences attached to his feast and to his invocation; the virtue of water hallowed by the immersion of his relics or medals, accompanied by the formula approved by the Church on June 13, 1888. Few saints have been so greatly honoured as Saint Vincent, and rightly so, for God exalts his servants in proportion as they have humbled and abased themselves.

²⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul à Châtillon-les-Dombes, Bourg, 1908, in-8°.

CHAPTER LXIX

THE SAINT'S BIOGRAPHERS

ORE than a hundred lives of Saint Vincent de Paul have been published; of these Abelly's¹ is the most devout and exact, Maynard's² the longest, Bougaud's³ the most literary and charming, and Arthur Loth's⁴ the most splendidly illustrated. Collet⁵ must not be forgotten, for his great life deserves a place of honour alongside those mentioned. If we turn to shorter lives, Emmanuel de Broglie's⁶ is characterised by sober eloquence, Renaudin's⁷ by painstaking accuracy, Lavedan's⁸ by brilliant style and Redier's⁹ by warm eloquence. We may also mention Victor Giraud's¹⁰ beautiful study for which no praise is too high.

Other writers have dealt not with the Saint's whole life, but with particular episodes; for instance Chantelauze,¹¹ who was interested with his relations with the de Gondis, Feillet,¹² who dealt with the relief of the provinces

¹ La vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1664, 2 vol. in-4°.

² Saint Vincent de Paul, Sa vie, son temps, ses œuvres, son influence, Paris, 1860, 4 vol. in-8°.

³ Histoire de Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1889, 2 vol. in-8°.

⁴ Saint Vincent de Paul et sa mission sociale, Paris, 1880, in-4°.

⁵ Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1748, 2 vol. in-4°.

⁶ Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1897, in-12 (Collection : Les Saints).

⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Marseille, 1927, in-16.

⁸ Monsieur Vincent, aumonier des galères, Paris, 1928, in-8° (Collection : Le roman des grandes existences).

⁹ La vrai vie de Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1927, in-12°.

¹⁰ Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1932, in-8° (Collection : Les grands cœurs).

¹¹ Saint Vincent de Paul et les Gondi, Paris, 1882, in-8°.

¹² Le misère au temps de la Fronde et Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, nouv. ed., 1868, in-12.

ruined by the Wars of the Fronde, and Simard,¹³ who confined his attention to Marseilles.

We cannot deal with all these works and will therefore confine our attention to the most important, those that have served as a foundation for all the others, namely, Abelly's, Collet's, Maynard's and Bougaud's.

Louis Abelly was born in 1606 and was the son of the Treasurer and Receiver General of the financial district of Limoges. After his ordination, he joined the association of ecclesiastics that came to be known as 'the Tuesday Conferences' and took an active part in the missions given by Saint Vincent and his priests. He went to Bayonne with Francis Fouquet to act as his Vicar General and Official, and, as the village of Pouy lay on his route, he stopped there to give the de Pauls news of their brother or uncle in Paris.¹⁴ He remained only two or three years in Bayonne, and on returning to Paris he exchanged his rank of Grand Vicar for the humbler one of a village pastor. Abelly, however, really deserved a higher post, and we find him shortly afterwards as parish priest of Saint-Josse, Paris (1644-1652), first spiritual director of the General Hospital (1657-1659) and then Bishop of Rodez (1664-1667). A stroke of paralysis which rendered one arm useless compelled him to resign his see, and Saint-Lazare offered him hospitality for the remainder of his life.

In this peaceful haven, he divided his time between writing devotional and theological works, spiritual direction, and the government of several communities of women, amongst others the Daughters of the Cross of which he was Superior for forty-one years. He composed forty books, amongst which were *The Crown of the Christian Year*,¹⁵ which ran to forty-five editions, a *Medulla Theologica*,¹⁶ which earned for him from Boileau the title of 'Abelly the mellow,' and others which earned a legitimate success such as *Sacerdos Christianus*,¹⁷ On the obedience and submission due

¹³ Saint Vincent de Paul et ses œuvres à Marseille, Lyon, 1894, in-8°.

¹⁴ Abelly, op. cit., Bk. I, Avis au lecteur.

¹⁵ 2 vol. in-12, 1657. ¹⁶ Ibid., Paris, 1652, 13 editions.

¹⁷ Paris, 1656, in-8°, 5 editions.



LOUIS ABELLY

said memoranda, and that we possess the originals of the letters inserted in the same book. In faith of which we have signed the present certificate and sealed it with our own seal at Saint Lazare-lez-Paris, on the twentieth day of the month of August, one thousand six hundred and sixty eight. Alméras.'

Two conclusions may be drawn from Abelly's words and Alméras' certificate : first, that Abelly is undoubtedly the author of the first life of Saint Vincent de Paul, and second, that his work is based upon documents of unquestionable authenticity.

The preparation of materials is only a preliminary operation to the composition of a book. The workmen who hew rough stones from the quarry, or who trim them for the purpose for which they are intended, are certainly making preparations for the labours of those who will build the house, but they are not themselves the builders. The builder is the man who takes the stones, arranges, disposes and binds them together with mortar; he is also, in a manner, the man who formulates in his own mind, or sets down on paper plans which the masons have to carry out with their hands; he is the architect. Abelly certainly was both the architect and the mason of the Life of the Venerable Servant of God, Vincent de Paul, and he alone deserves to be regarded as its author. It was he who drew up the plan, selected the materials, set aside all that appeared false or doubtful or of which the publication seemed inopportune, classified what remained, determined their place in the edifice he was erecting, presented them in his own way, and added what in his opinion were appropriate reflections.

Claude Joseph Lacour, a Vincentian Father of the Province of Champagne, started with a false conception of authorship when, in his *History of the Congregation of the Mission*,²⁴ completed in 1720 and published in the twentieth century, he wrote as follows: 'The Missionaries worked at

²⁴ Claude Lacour's MS. is preserved at the Mother-House of the Priests of the Mission. It was published in the Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission in 1897, 1898 and 1899 (Vols. LXII, LXIII, LXIV). The passage given above is in Vol. LXII, p. 310, and is p. 68 in the original MS. this biography by sending him all the memoranda that might prove useful. His Lordship of Rodez... was requested to adopt the book, and to put his name to it, out of conformity with the practice left by M. Vincent to all his children not to publish books. This prelate did so to please M. Alméras, who had asked him, and he scarcely made any other contribution to the book. . . . It was M. Fournier principally who worked at it.'

This purely personal opinion awoke no response; Collet, who wrote twenty years later, does not even seem to be aware of it. Until the nineteenth century Lacour had no disciples; the first of whom was Abbé Maynard who produced a multitude of others. 'It should be made clear,' he wrote, 25 'that Abelly did nothing but lend his name to a book of which, up to the present day, he has been regarded as the author, and which is in reality a family record to which he stood godfather.' And a little later, 26 speaking of the materials utilised : 'They were revised and worked up by the Missionaries themselves, and it was Fournier, one of them, who was almost its sole redactor. When the book was finished, they looked around for an author to adopt it, in order to conform to the maxims and practice instituted by Saint Vincent that his followers were not to publish books; the Bishop of Rodez . . . consented to lend his name and to assume the responsibility of publication.'

As a result of this gratuitous assertion of Abbé Maynard, Abelly was deprived of his title of author, and Fournier enriched with the spoils. Reviews, dictionaries,²⁷ and historical works²⁸ confidently accepted the new opinion, and yet, if the question is closely examined, it is clear we should revert to the old one.

²⁵ Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1860, Vol. I, p. vii.

²⁶ P. viii.

²⁷ Vogt, Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie ecclésiastiques, Vol. I, pp. 102, 103.

²⁸ Notices bibliographiques sur les écrivains de la Congrégation de la Mission par un prêtre de la même Congrégation (M. Rosset), 1878, pp. 105, 106; Notices sur les prêtres, clercs, et frères défunts de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1881, 1st series, Vol. I, pp. 260-265; Fernand Mourret, Histoire générale de l'Église, Vol. VI, p. 121, note 1.

That Abelly is the author of the first life of Saint Vincent de Paul is plainly asserted in the very title of the book : Vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul, par Louis Abelly, Évêque de Rodez ; it is also stated in the dedicatory letter addressed to the Oueen-Mother and signed, Louis, Bishop of Rodez; in the letters of approbation by the Archbishop of Auch and the Bishop of Evreux, published at the beginning of the first volume ; it is admitted by Father Alméras, repeated and affirmed by Abelly in his replies to the anonymous attacks on his work by the Iansenist. Martin de Barcos. 'I may, with truth, say to him,'29 he writes, 'what Tertullian said by way of reproach to the heretic Marcion who also had written an anonymous work : what notice need be taken of a book that dare not appear with uplifted head? What credit does one owe it? What certainty can one place in it, since it is ashamed to proclaim the name and the qualifications of its author? This anonymous writer, like Marcion, by concealing himself, sufficiently manifests how ashamed he is of his fits of passion, and how he fears to be convicted of the false statements which he imputes to me. Human as well as divine faith is founded only on the conviction that what has been said or written is worthy of credence. Hence he must be known if he is to be judged, and how can he be known if he conceals Can men rely on an unknown individual, himself? on a man without a name, and perhaps without honour or conscience? When the accused boldly faces the judge and his accuser takes to flight not daring to maintain in public what he has said in secret, which of the two deserves condemnation? Our Lord has decided the question: "He who loves the truth," says Christ, "does not fear to walk in daylight, but the worker of iniquity seeks for darkness to hide him." This consideration of itself is enough to ruin all that this anonymous author had dared to assert in his libel.'

Abelly would scarcely have adopted such a tone if he had merely lent his name to another man's work, above all, if he had to admit the fact in the same pamphlet, as has been alleged, two pages further on. But this is how he continues :

29 La vraie défense, p. 13.

'Let him declaim as much as he pleases against me; let him show, if he can, that I am the least and worst of all men, I shall not consider myself offended because . . . I shall always enjoy the advantage of having neither disguised nor concealed myself. I have placed my name in the front of my book. I have declared myself to be its author and I am bound to maintain that I have written nothing but the truth. The anonymous scribe, on the contrary . . . conceals himself, shuns the light, and does not dare to appear.'

It is impossible to speak more clearly. Fournier himself implicitly admits that he is not the author of the first life of Saint Vincent, for we know from Father Alméras³⁰ that he criticised it and regretted that ' here and there very trifling acts of virtues are recorded.'

Consequently, there is no doubt that the work is Abelly's, and further, no doubt that it has considerable historical value, when we bear in mind the qualifications of the men who prepared the materials and the fidelity with which the author has inserted them in his book.³¹ The materials placed in his hands came from those who had lived with Saint Vincent and collaborated with him in his great enterprises for the corporal and spiritual welfare of his fellow men. Amongst those asked to contribute were the Ladies of Charity, the Daughters of Charity, the Visitation Nuns, the Sisters of the Cross, the Priests of the Tuesday Conferences, Husson, the former consul at Tunis, and de Lestocq, the parish priest of Saint-Lawrence. Brothers Ducournau and Robineau, Fathers Alméras, Berthe, Jolly, Dehorgny, Martin and Cuissot either brought or sent him their own statements; information was forwarded from Dax, Folleville, Clichy and Châtillon. After the death of the holy Founder, each house of the Company had a conference on his virtues; the reports were sent to Saint-Lazare and entrusted to Abelly.

The Bishop of Rodez was therefore well supplied with authentic documents, and when his work was finished, he

³⁰ Letter to Father Simon, Superior at Rome, August 1, 1670 (Archives of the Mission, Rome).

⁸¹ Brother Robineau's memoirs are still extant and are reproduced almost word for word in Abelly's work.

took the further precaution of submitting it to Father Alméras and other competent persons for examination.

Nevertheless, it would be an exaggeration to sav that the memoranda on which he worked are all of equal value. Documents dealing with the years preceding the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission were concerned with long-distant facts and incidents, of which either no witnesses remained, or witnesses whose memory was more or less confused. Canon de Saint-Martin who was entrusted with the task of collecting information in the Saint's native district was not the man needed for such a work. for he had neither the taste for research, ³² nor the knowledge of local history,³³ nor the critical flair which every historian needs if he is to distinguish between truth and error in the evidence placed before him. The good old Canon's word is not authoritative ; facts which he alleges and which have no other foundation rest on a very shaky basis, and it would therefore be wrong to regard them as indubitable.

Abelly deserves a still more serious censure. It seems as if he did not dare to tell the whole truth on several points, such as the date of Saint Vincent's birth,³⁴ the year and the conditions of his resignation of the parish of Clichy,³⁵ and the fact that he held a number of benefices simultaneously.³⁶ The life of a saint should not be a panegyric. Again, the plan adopted, 'life, works and virtues,' is a bad one, inasmuch as it cannot be realised ; three such

³² Nothing was easier for him than to find out the exact dates of Saint Vincent's ordinations ; three of the dates given are wrong.

³³ He was ignorant of the fact that there was no chapel at Buglose in the Saint's youth, and that Jean-Jacques du Sault had been Bishop of Dax since 1598. It is probably he, also, who prolongs the life of Cardinal d'Ossat to 1610; the Cardinal, as a matter of fact, died in 1604.

³⁴ 1581 and not 1576.

³⁵ Saint Vincent did not resign until 1625 or 1626 and also received a pension from his successor. Abelly positively states the contrary, as far as the second point is concerned, and as regards the first, he seems to place the resignation before Saint Vincent went to the de Gondis.

³⁶ Abelly never says a word about the benefices of Écouis and Saint Nicholas de Grosse-Sauve. divisions, no matter what is done, are bound to overlap; Abelly was not, in fact, able to devote one whole book to the 'life' without referring over and over again to the 'works and virtues.' Moreover, it is far better, if the reader's attention is to be held, that the virtues should not be made the subject of a special book, but should either be examined briefly or shine through the whole book. Α biography is an historical and not a devotional work. It is quite true that in 1664 Abelly's method could be justified by contemporary usage, and by the desire of contributing to the future canonisation of the 'Venerable Servant of God,' but customs have changed, and the canonisation has long since been an accomplished fact. Finally, the style is wanting in animation; quotations are too long, too frequent, and too often mere repetitions of the same idea. The author lingers over a multitude of triffing, unimportant details that clog the movement of the narrative. This was the chief criticism brought against the work on its appearance, and hence Abelly was asked to prepare an abridged edition which was published in 1667; he sacrificed the whole of the second book, entirely devoted to the Saint's labours, and, in the third, long extracts taken from Saint Vincent's addresses.

Father Alméras would have wished the scissors to be used even more freely on the first books, and on August 1, 1670, he wrote to the Superior at Rome who was preparing an Italian edition : 'You could abbreviate the work a good deal, at least the first book in which some chapters are far too long; they expatiate on a single topic when there are so many other and more important ones to be dealt with. For instance, it is thought here that the chapter on what he did at Châtillon-en-Bresse is too long; a great number of trifling details are given which could be suppressed and the chapter shortened by half. Others think that when he is dealing with the House of Gondi, too many points of little interest are inserted, such as his journeys, returns, letters, replies, etc.; another instance is that of the Prior's death, which contains scarcely anything but what a person of very ordinary virtue would have done and would have been bound to do in regard to such a benefactor. Again,

the chapter dealing with what he did for Commander de Sillery could be greatly shortened, and similar sections which precede the principal labours of M. Vincent. . . . As for the second part, which deals with the virtues, scarcely anything need be retrenched; the whole of it is good; but Father Fournier thinks that in some places very trifling acts of virtue are recorded here and there.' Despite these criticisms, coming though they did from high quarters, the 1667 edition was re-issued in 1684 without any modifications. We shall return, however, to the first edition.

Abelly committed another fault ; he felt it necessary to alter the texts of documents of which he has given us extracts; he did so either to accentuate the pious note or to prevent Saint Vincent from employing expressions which he regarded as inelegant; or, finally, to correct what he thought were errors or mistakes due to distraction. When he starts to improve the style, he is, as a rule, unfortunate, for what he inserts is very seldom as good as what he has altered. For instance, in a letter addressed by Saint Vincent to Saint Louise de Marillac, the text runs: 'Oh! what a tree in God's sight have you not seemed to-day, since you have produced such good fruit ! May you be for ever a beautiful tree of life, bringing forth fruits of love.'37 Abelly did not care for this, so he substitutes the following: 'Oh ! how you have appeared to-day in the sight of God as a beautiful tree, since, by His grace, you have produced such a fruit ! I beseech Him that, in His infinite bounty, you may be ever a veritable tree of life bringing forth fruits of true charity !'38 Here we have added : 'by His grace,' 'by His infinite bounty,' and 'charity' is replaced by 'love.' This attempt to make Saint Vincent more pious and more supernatural is certainly an extraordinary obsession.

If anyone wishes to go to the trouble of comparing the original letter of the Saint's captivity in Barbary with the long passages reproduced in *The Life of the Venerable Servant* of God, he can see at a glance how Abelly set to work. He suppresses, and one may easily guess the reason, the

³⁷ Saint Vincent de Paul, Vol. I, p. 62. ³⁸ Op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. XXIII, p. 106. Vol. 111.-21 phrase 'worse than tigers,' applied to the Turks, and quite naked' in reference to the slaves; he transforms 'to work a miracle' into 'to work wonders'; 'had such a divine pleasure' into 'said to have experienced such a pleasure.' As for the passage on the transmutation of metals, he suppressed that completely, for what would people have said if they had known that Saint Vincent had taken part in diabolical chemical experiments ! Furthermore, it is clear that in two or three passages he intended not only to alter the words but even the meaning so as to accommodate them with preconceived ideas. Thus, 'my age which is going on for eighty years,' becomes, 'my age which has passed eighty years.'39 We freely admit that these alterations may not have been made by Abelly himself but by those who supplied him with the documents ; he may have simply been the first to be deceived.

The work has another blemish, but here the author is not to blame, for it is due to the period in which it was published. A certain lapse of time is essential if we are to form a sound judgement on what a man has done, and also if we are to have complete freedom in our appreciation of men and things. A biographer cannot tell everything four years after the death of the man whose history he relates. Not only are there great personages, but also families, whose feelings have to be considered. If he is not to sin against truth, the author will keep silence, and thus leave a void that has later to be filled, or he may, out of deference, eulogise persons who in no way deserve praise, and clearly, such forced appreciations can scarcely be taken at their face value.

Yet, whatever may be said of these imperfections, which are serious enough in form though triffing in matter, Abelly's life of Saint Vincent, in which we have almost verbatim accounts of persons who were actual witnesses of what they related, should and will, we trust, remain the chief source on which future biographers will draw.

It was from this source that Collet drew largely in 1748 when he composed his great work.

Peter Collet, born at Ternay (Loire-et-Cher) on August 31, ³⁹ Op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. I, Sect. IX, p. 188. 1693, became acquainted with the Priests of the Mission at the Seminary of Mans. It has been conjectured that he was already a priest when, on September 6, 1717, he entered Saint-Lazare,⁴⁰ but we have proofs that he had not been ordained priest on September 7, 1719, for in the formula employed in taking the holy vows, he alludes to himself as a deacon. He received the Order of priesthood shortly afterwards and was then appointed to a chair of Theology at the Mother-House. He was subsequently sent to a seminary in Brittany, but returned to Paris in 1731; he was recalled by his Superior General at the entreaty of the Archbishop of Paris, Charles de Ventimille.

The death of Tournely (December 26, 1729) had interrupted the publication of a course of theology of which the conclusion was everywhere impatiently awaited. Cardinal de Fleury himself, the Prime Minister, suggested to Collet that he should continue the work; Collet agreed, and spent thirty years in completing the work, for the seventeenth and last volume did not appear until 1761. This, however, was not his sole occupation. He published two volumes of sermons, and more than forty works in various branches of ecclesiastical science : theology, Canon Law, history and spirituality. When his great theological treatise was finished, he made a journey to Italy for pleasure and had the happiness to obtain an audience of Pope Clement XIII at Padua.

This industrious theologian took up his pen once more when he returned to France. He ended his days as Superior of Saint-Firmin, on October 6, 1770. Of the numerous manuscript works which he left behind him only some have been printed. His influence over the clergy of the eighteenth century was very considerable; he was consulted in all quarters, and his Course of Theology in seven volumes, an abridgement of Tournely's great work, became a classic in the seminaries of France, and was widely spread even in Italy and Germany. Some of his works are polemical attacks on the Jansenists, whom he did not love and who heartily returned the compliment.

⁴⁰ Rosset, Notices bibliographiques sur les écrivains de la Congrégation de la Mission, Angoulême, 1878, oct., p. 34.

Such was the man who wrote The Life of Saint Vincent de Paul, published at Nancy in 1748. 'It is almost ten years ago,' he writes in the Preface, 'since the proposal was made to me to set about writing the work which I now present to the public. I undertook the work without consulting too nicely either my tastes or my strength. I even composed, in a fairly short time, some portions with which those who set me to work did not seem displeased, and there was reason to believe that I should not take long to fulfil my promise. It must be confessed that my inclinations led me in other directions. Accustomed as I have been for very many years to handle the pages of theologians and canonists to discover therein decisions on all manner of questions, to extract therefrom that modicum of light which renders a man less useless to society, it was only with a sort of repugnance that I turned my attention to a history which I thought I knew. . . . Furthermore, the length and difficulty of the enterprise filled me with amazement. . . . Impatient in the highest degree, when it is merely a matter of arranging words in their proper order, I am almost indefatigable when it is a matter of making researches. Accordingly I have omitted nothing that could either lead me to a knowledge of new facts or enable me to establish the authenticity of doubtful events, or furnish me with exact dates : dates without which history is but a mere assemblage of disconnected events that have neither relation, nor elegance nor grace. In order to attain this end, it was essential to examine the process of the Beatification and of the Canonisation of the Saint whose life I now present; to study the letters written to Clement XI by Sovereigns, Bishops and Generals of Religious Orders who have taken part in this important matter; and also the letters written by Saint Vincent himself, of which there are still six or seven thousand either in Paris or the provinces; to consult both the memoirs on which Abelly worked and the manuscript lives of the first companions of our holy priest; to study what was said about him by those who treated him with the scantiest respect and consideration ; to unearth what could be discovered about this great man, either at the Oratory, where he had loving friends, or at Macon, where in a few

days he won fame for himself by his charity and intelligence, or at Châtillon-les-Dombes where his memory will live for eternity, or lastly, at Marseilles and Sainte-Reine which owe him, in whole or in part, their celebrated hospital. Finally, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God* published in 1664 by Louis Abelly, Bishop of Rodez, has been, as is only just, the source on which I have chiefly drawn.'

Nothing could be truer than the last sentence. Collet followed the first biographer so closely that he borrows whole pages from him without mentioning the fact, and when he reproduces some extract or other from Saint Vincent's letters and addresses, he often does so with Abelly's 'improvements.' A real biographer would have gone to the original sources, and, though relying on a previous biography, however good, would not have pushed dependence to the point of slavishness. At the time when he lived and with the means at his disposal, Collet might have given us something more personal; unfortunately, he had other things to do, and a divided mind never works as efficiently as one absorbed in a single subject. Abelly's influence is to be found everywhere throughout the book, except in the ninth and last which deals with the process of Canonisation, the miracles and devotion to the Saint. The seventh book reviews Saint Vincent's undertakings one by one, and the eighth, his virtues. Both are less extensive and less loaded with quotations than the two corresponding books of the first biographer. The first six books follow Saint Vincent year by year.

Abelly's plan was defective; Collet's was even more so. In a life so full of ramifications as that of Saint Vincent, the plan of keeping to chronological order is the worst; it prevents a general survey, and renders complete treatment of questions impossible; in fact, it is not a history but a chronicle. Collet realised this so fully that he frequently abandons his plan to follow the course of a particular undertaking beyond the date indicated in the margin, and hence one is forced, for instance, to seek under the date 1633, for events that occurred in 1637, 1639, 1642 and 1644; it would be wearisome to multiply examples.

Collet's style is unpleasing, burthened as it is with ' thats '

and 'whichs'; it is cold and dry, and one feels that he is a theologian who has lost his way in a history.

Apart from Abelly's life, documents concerned with the Process of Canonisation (which are used in the ninth book) and Jansenist writings which Collet as a theologian had to read and study, his sources are few in number : the Archives of Saint-Lazare,⁴¹ of the Oratory, lives of Saint Louise de Marillac, Olier, Bourdoise, Pavillon, Cromwell, Mademoiselle Pollalion and Madame de Miramion ; the Collection of Narratives dealing with the ruined provinces during the Fronde ; the *Mémoires* of Lancelot and the Duchesse de Motteville; the History of Our Lady of Buglose by Mauriol, the History of Lorraine by Calmet, the History of Paris by Sauval and the Genealogical History of the House of Gondi by Corbinelli. The book to which, after Abelly, he most frequently refers is a chronological abridgement of the life of Saint Vincent known as the Ristretto cronologico, a work of no historical value, published in 1729.

To sum up, Collet's *Life of Saint Vincent de Paul* is a work that is barely readable, owing to its plan and style, and one which adds little or nothing to Abelly, with the exception of the last book. A large number of abridged editions were published throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in 1818, a second complete edition, with certain alterations, in four volumes.

Collet's work appeared on the Canonisation of Saint Vincent de Paul; Maynard's to commemorate the second centenary of his death.

Michel-Ulysse Maynard, born at Saint-Maixent (Deux-Sèvres) in 1814, was ordained priest when twenty-five years old. He was professor of Rhetoric in the 'petty seminary' at Montmorillon and subsequently Superior of the Church School of Saint Vincent de Paul at Poitiers, but gave up teaching to devote himself entirely to his favourite studies. He had a marvellously retentive memory, a flowing, limpid style, and a mind that was at once clear and exact. There is no place to equal Paris for a scholar in search of documents,

⁴¹ The archives contained manuscript lives of Fathers Nacquart, Etienne, John Le Vacher and memoirs utilised by Abelly. so Maynard took up his residence there. The Catholic Bibliography and The Universe sought for and obtained his collaboration. He wrote 'Pascal, his Life and Character, his Writings and his Genius';⁴² 'Voltaire, his Life and Works';⁴³ 'Jacques Crétineau-Joly, his political, religious and literary life '⁴⁴; 'The Blessed Virgin '⁴⁵; 'Mgr Dupanloup and his Historian, M. Lagrange.'⁴⁶ The Bishop of Poitiers, Cardinal Pie, was much attached to Abbé Maynard; in 1872, he offered him a Canon's stall, and a new life opened out before the eminent historian in his solitary house on the banks of the Clain, a life at once peaceful and laborious, in which his time was divided between his duties as a Canon and his books and correspondence. He died at Poitiers on January 20, 1893, aged sixty-eight.

He was forty-six years old when the first edition of his Saint Vincent de Paul was published; he had been asked to write it by a Catholic publisher, Dewailly, the nephew of a former Superior General of the Mission. Father Etienne gave Maynard every facility for the composition of the work; he invited him to stay at Saint-Lazare and placed the Archivist of the Congregation, Father Gabriel Perboyre, at his disposal, with orders to conceal nothing. Maynard read slowly and attentively the letters and addresses of Saint Vincent, the note-books of Brother Robineau, the official deeds of the foundations of the Company, the documents dealing with the process of Canonisation and the manuscript lives of the first Priests and Brothers of the Mission.

His book is superior to those of Abelly and Collet in style, framework and plan, for Maynard wrote well, knew how to arouse the interest of his readers and possessed warmth of feeling and literary ease. Saint Vincent is not represented as standing apart from his contemporaries; Maynard really gives us, as the sub-title indicates, 'the life, times, labours and influence.' 'The story is painted in broad outlines and not in a series of scattered sketches. . . . Each

- ⁴² 2 vol. oct., Paris, 1850. ⁴³ *I vol.* oct., Paris, 1875. ⁴⁵ vol. oct., Paris, 1875.
- ⁴⁵ 1 vol. quarto, Paris, 1877.
- ⁴⁶ 1 vol. oct., Paris, 1884.

of the Saint's undertakings is shown at its commencement and also with its antecedents and progress, its fruitfulness and permanence, and lastly, its continuation even to our own time.'⁴⁷ Maynard enlarged, embellished and provided an orderly arrangement of his subject ; he wrote a life of 'Monsieur Vincent' really worthy of that great Saint. Does this imply that it is free from all criticism? He did not think so himself, and he therefore set to work afresh with the intention of improving both the matter and form of his book.

In 1874 he wrote: 48 'This is a new edition of Saint Vincent de Paul and it is the last and definite edition. I will not write this life again and neither shall anybody else. For more than ten years I have not lost sight of it for a single day. and have neglected nothing of which I was capable to bring it to the highest point of perfection. I have scrupulously corrected the style and improved the plan, though as the plan is rather of the logical than of the chronological order, I have not changed its essentials.... I have contented myself with rendering it lighter and more easy to read, by consigning to footnotes and appendices a certain number of papers and documents with which it was formerly burthened and hampered, and in this way, the book has now become. especially for reading in public, much more easy and flowing. ... I have paid particular attention to enriching this edition with new facts and documents. When I wrote the book entitled The Virtues and Spiritual Doctrine of Saint Vincent de Paul.⁴⁹ I made it a law to re-read all the Saint's letters, all his discourses and conferences and all the authentic documents of his history : and a large number of details that had at first escaped my notice or that had remained unintelligible, especially in the correspondence, have very much impressed me on this occasion, or have been rendered more clear by the fuller knowledge I had acquired of my subject as a whole and in its most minute parts. I have

⁴⁷ Preface to the first edition. ⁴⁸ Ibid.,

⁴⁹ Paris, 1864, in-12. Maynard also composed Maximes et pratiques de Saint Vincent de Paul (1 vol. in-18, Paris, 1882) and an abridgement of his large life of Saint Vincent (Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul, Paris, 1861, in-12). carefully collected and employed them to improve certain accounts that were hitherto incomplete or obscure. Moreover, the appeal which I made was answered and the children of Saint Vincent de Paul and even persons not belonging to his double family have very kindly allowed me to have some interesting documents.'

Men who discover gaps and imperfections in their work should, one might imagine, draw a lesson of modesty from the fact, but Maynard was not so wise. He got it into his head that his book had nothing to fear in the future from critics. 'It is all there,' he goes on to say, 'harvest and gleaning, the whole work is done once and for all, and nothing of any importance and value will be discovered in future. Hence I said I will never write this life again and nobody else shall ever do so. Nothing can be done save to plunder it, to take it to pieces, to coin from it money bearing another image and superscription, as has already been done in France and abroad, with a more or less explicit criticism as a justification.'

It is astonishing that such an intelligent man as Maynard could ever have written words of such unconscious naïvety.

His book has, no doubt, great qualities, but it also has defects, the most important of which is lack of critical judgement. The author embroiders with the greatest ease definite. historic facts and embellishes them with circumstances suggested by his lively imagination. He accepts legends with the most disconcerting avidity, taking no account whatever of their inherent improbability. Everything favourable to his hero is good, no matter from what source it springs. He is far more fascinated by beauty than by truth, and, on occasion, never hesitates to sacrifice the latter to the former. For instance,⁵⁰ at pages 403-404 in Volume III, the reader will find extracts from a so-called diary of a Sister of Charity in which are noted day by day the nightly wanderings of Saint Vincent de Paul in search of abandoned foundlings. When asked had he seen the original manuscript, he said he did not know, and at once proceeded to add⁵¹: 'But the story is so touching that

⁵⁰ 1874 edition.

⁵¹ Letter to Eugène Veuillot (Archives of the Mission).

I could not omit it, and hence my prejudice in its favour in all our recent controversies.'

Sentiments such as these are not worthy of an historian; in the case of Abelly and of Collet, we have at least exactitude, but Maynard's book rather resembles the romantic biographies so fashionable at the present time.

The worthy Canon had a disagreeable surprise in his peaceful retreat on the banks of the Clain when, fifteen years after the edition of 1874, he learned that a new 'History of Saint Vincent de Paul,' written by Mgr Bougaud, Bishop of Laval and a former Vicar General of Mgr Dupanloup at Orléans, was on sale in the bookshops.

Bougaud had won public esteem by a learned, apologetic work entitled : 'Christianity and the present time,' and by his biographies of Saints Chantal, Margaret Mary and Monica. He was then next attracted by the noble figure of Saint Louis, King of France, but changed his mind in favour of Saint Vincent de Paul, to whom he felt even more strongly drawn.

'Vincent de Paul' . . . seems . . . ' to have been in the seventeenth century a precursor of those great works which in the nineteenth, it is the Church's mission to accomplish. The nineteenth is a democratic century. . . . Democracy is on a flowing tide. . . . Everybody to-day is proud to serve Moreover, the democratic movement has the people. brought to the front social questions which present this special danger, that a large number of people in these days would like to settle them without, or in opposition to, the Church.... Such is the standpoint taken by Mgr Bougaud in this *Life*. One feels, when reading it, that he has always an eye on the men of his own day. It was, and he had a presentiment of the fact, his last work; he wished it to be his swan-song.... Into it he put all his heart and genius, and one feels that it possesses a greater artistic finish than any of his other writings. . . . It is his art that arranges the materials, that selects, groups and adorns them with all its glamour, though a glamour in harmony with the subject, for good taste is always an essential element of art. Mgr Bougaud never loses sight of the artistic side of his work, whether he deals with that which is so important in all matters, namely, the composition and arrangement of the material, what the poet terms *lucidus ordo*, or the style at which he loved to work and perfect . . . not, indeed, from a vain preoccupation with form, but from the scrupulous anxiety of a priest and apostle who was also an artist, and who knew that badly written books not only do not survive, but do not win souls to God and therefore suffer a double failure. The merit of his work consists less in what he has to tell than in the manner in which he presents us with a life already so well known. . . . Laymen, for whom the book is chiefly intended, whether believers or unbelievers, will not lay it down without the conviction that they have contemplated in Vincent de Paul, and in almost superhuman proportions, a great benefactor of mankind and a great saint.'⁵²

Bougaud died before he had revised the book, and his friend the Abbé Lagrange published the manuscript without making any attempt at revision or at eliminating those imperfections of matter and form which are always to be found before a work is really ready for the press. As there was no chapter written on the purely supernatural element in the Saint's life, suitable selections were provided from Abelly.

Abbé Maynard showed no great display of affection for the new biography. In the Universe of November 4, 1889, under the initials C. P. (Canonicus Pictaviensis), he made a bitter and aggressive attack on the book which raised a storm amongst the many friends of the late Bishop of Laval who, though yet unaware of the personality of the reviewer, still had their suspicions. 'C,' said Lieutenant Paimblant de Rouil, the Bishop's nephew, 'stands for Canaille and P for poltroon.' He called on Eugène Veuillot, editor of the Universe, who was then a septuagenarian, and asked for the name of the anonymous writer; as Veuillot refused to divulge it, the Lieutenant slapped him in the face. This incident caused a sensation of which the newspapers made

⁵² Histoire de Saint Vincent de Paul, by Mgr. Bougaud (1889 edition, Vol. I, with an Introduction by Abbé Lagrange). (An English translation of this work by Father Joseph Brady, C.M., was published by Longmans, London.) the most; Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris, forbade the Universe to continue the publication of attacks.

The fiery Paimblant resolved to avenge his uncle at any cost. After slapping Veuillot's face, he attacked Maynard. On November 9, he wrote to the Canon : 'If you think you can take shelter beyond some pamphlet or another, I warn you that if it is not signed with the name of somebody whom I can attack, I will hold you responsible for it, and will administer the necessary correction. Consider yourself sufficiently warned.' Maynard was not frightened at the threat, for a pamphlet appeared at the end of November under the title : 'Mgr Bougaud, Apologist and Historian,' containing a preface of twenty-four pages signed Ulysse Maynard, and sixty-two pages of criticism, of which sixty were devoted to denunciations of expressions that were scarcely Christian, and that were profane and even worldly, in the new 'History of Saint Vincent de Paul,' especially in regard to feminine beauty, and also conjectural or even false dates and plagiarisms. C. P. declared that he was the author of the second part and that his views were in perfect conformity with Maynard's. Paimblant certainly must have trembled with rage when he read the pamphlet, but friendly advice helped to soothe his nerves and he remained quiet.

There was one good result of this controversy. Bougaud's work was re-published in 1891 after it had been revised by two Vincentian Fathers, Chevalier and Tournier, who, to use their own expression, had removed 'cart-loads' of errors. The revisors interrupted their labours too soon, for if some further 'cart-loads' had been eliminated, we should have had an excellent book. This biography is certainly a remarkably attractive and impassioned piece of writing, but it would be much better if it were more true. It is hard to see why its inaccurate statements should not be completely removed, and then with beauty of form we should have solidity of substance; it would supply food for the mind without ceasing to charm it.

Despite the difficulties of the task, we, in our turn, have endeavoured to tell the story of the life of this incomparable man whose sanctity is equalled by his genius. We could have wished that an angel had guided our pen so that we might not write anything unworthy of him. One stands confused before the beauty, immensity and solidity of his labours. No one, perhaps, on earth ever gave us a better idea than he of the Omnipotence and Providence of God. He seems to create from nothing. His active universal charity, which foresaw everything, engaged in battle against all forms of calamities and evils; it embraced both soul and body, the Church and Society, the present and the future ; it extended to childhood and old age, to the sick and infirm, to convict-hulks, prisons and galleys; it made no distinction between Catholics, heretics and pagans. 'The grave,' writes a Christian orator, 53 'against which all human powers are shattered, only increased his influence. His memory sustains his works and brings forth new ones, and his name, far more than those of great commanders, still makes conquests after his departure from this life. From each of his creations, as from so many heaven-descended seeds, spring up fresh and innumerable good works which rejoice the Church and console Society. Amongst all great men it is his unique glory that human kindness cannot conceive or attempt anything that he has not previously and in some manner embraced within his immense capacity for original conception and independent action. One is tempted to say that he has touched the utmost confines of charity beyond which man may not henceforward pass.'

⁵³ Panégyrique de Saint Vincent de Paul et discours divers, par Abbé Ch. de Place, Paris, A. Le Clère, 1857, in-8°, p. 100.

THE END

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Gazette de France.

Univers (L').

INDEX

(The	Roman	numerals	refer	to th	e vo	olume	and	the	Arabic	to	the	page.
Names of places are printed in italics.)												

А

Abbaye (the prison in Paris), II: 307

Abbeville, II: 496. III: 433 Abelly (Louis), xix, I: 2, 6, 7, 14,

15, 19, 23, 24, 26, 38, 42-44, 50, 51, 52, 56, 58, 64, 65, 74, 78, 80, 95, 100, 104, 111, 113-115, 122, 124-130, 134, 136, 138, 145, 150, 160-165, 171, 172, 174, 175, 205, 211, 233, 237, 239, 244, 245, 248, 257, 261, 266, 280-283, 285, 286, 300, 313, 318, 322, 324, 326, 327, 331, 332, 469, 493, 501, 505-507, 509, 510, 516-518, 521, 531, 559, 572, 577, 606, 607. II : 23, 31, 35, 36, 40, 47, 52, 115, 123, 124, 128, 129, 130, 135, 145-148, 151, 153, 154, 156-159, 160, 161, 163, 168, 192, 193, 228, 230-236, 242, 244, 250, 251, 253, 254, 256-259, 284, 287, 291, 293, 295, 301-304, 309, 314, 316, 320, 338-341, 343, 345, 356, 358, 359, 361-363, 369-371, 374-384, 387, 389-394, 397, 403, 406, 408, 410, 423, 435, 448-453, 455, 456, 460, 479, 482–484, 497, 499, 500. III : 3-5, 8-10, 15, 20, 26, 30, 32-35, 37-48, 52-54, 58, 64, 72, 73, 81, 86, 87, 88, 92, 94-97, 102, 105-108, 110-112, 115, 117, 119-121, 138, 142, 148, 150, 159, 161, 164, 165, 168, 170, 173, 175, 176, 180, 182-184, 187-189, 190, 192, 257, 270, 273, 274, 276, 281, 282, 283, 291-297, 299-301, 303-311, 313, 314, 317-320, 322-325, 326, 332, 333, 337, 338, 340-345, 353, 367-373, 376, 380, 384, 385, 399, 401, 408, 418, 450, 475-486, 489-491, 494, 495 Aberdeen, II: 39 Ablevoie, I: 424 Abraham, I: 160 Abram-Musgotus, II: 367

Acami (Dominic), I: 128 Achmet I, II: 32 Adam, II: 62, 201 Adam, a parish priest of Paris, III: 431 Admirault (Charles), I: 567 Adrian VI, III: 114 Africa, I: 404. II: 52 Agde, I: 458, 461, 598-600. II: 146. III: 313. See Fouquet (François) and Fouquet (Louis) Agen, I: 252, 260, 488, 532, 593-594. II: 153, 162, 171, 174. III: 38, 92, 158. See Elbene Agenois, I: 532 Agès (César de Saint-Martin d'). I: 15, 37, 40, 45 Agnes (Sister), I: 414 Agnes de Langeac (Mother), III: 17, 264 Aiguesmortes, I: 34 Aiguillon, I: 531-533 Aiguillon (Marie de Vignerod, marquise de Combalet, duchesse d'), I: 240, 279, 292, 306, 325-327, 339, 350, 380-382, 391, 402, 452, 531-533, 537-538, 562. II : 3, 35, 128, 144, 164, 176, 260, 292, 293, 296, 301, 304, 324, 327, 329, 330, 340, 343, 348, 350, 364, 371, 429, 433, 455, 488. III : 29, 38, 81, 133, 225, 287-289, 377, 389, 391-393, 398, 399, 450, 451, 453 Aire (Landes), I : 46, 47. III : 470 Aix, I: 47, 249, 250, 564. II: 250, 319. III: 96, 200, 273 Aizenay, I: 544 Ajax, II: 200 Alacoque (Saint Marguerite-Marie), III: 494 Alais, III: 96 Albania, II : 198 Alberici (Mario), III: 289 Albert the Great (St.), II: 301

- Albici (Francis, Cardinal), II: 368
- Albret (Sires d'), I: 10

Albret (Jeanne d'), I: 1, 9 Ambrus (Our Lady of), I: 20 Amelot (President Charles), II: Alençon, I: 289 460. III: 233, 245 Alet, I: 459, 526, 550-551. II: 145, 147, 171-172, 176, 226. III: Amelot (Marie de Lionne, dame), I: 4, 155, 175, 400, 402, 403. See 203 Pavillon Amelot (Marie-Therese), III: 233. Alex (Jean d'Arenthon d'), I: 556 244 Alexander the Great, II: 200 Amelot de Gournay (Michel), III: Alexander VII, Pope, I: 137, 200, 233 494-495, 497, 498, 500, 512. II: Amelote (Denis), I: 250. II: 460. 14, 160, 164-168. III : 154, 165, III: 326 America, II : 496 176, 288, 289 Amfreville (M. d'), III: 246 Alexander (Brother). See Véronne Alexis, Czar of Russia, II: 243 Amfreville (Mme d'), III: 246. Algiers, I: 32, 119, 326. II: 338, 249 Amiens, I: 68, 152, 269, 453, 524, 340, 343, 348, 349, 351, 352, 354 357, 363, 364, 365. III: 328, II: 131. III: 94, 158, 607. 432, 436, 437 235, 239, 455, 456 Algeria, I: 262. II: 337, 350 Amours (Marie-Charlotte d'), III: Alhoy (Louis-François-Joseph), II: 216 Anagni, III: 455 278 Aligre (Chancelier Etienne d'), I: Ancelin (Humbert), III: 410 Andilly (Catharine le Fevre de la 307, 322. II: 278 Aligre (Elizabeth Chapelier, dame Boderie, dame Arnauld d'), III: ď'), I : 322 125 Alix (Michel), II: 125 Andilly (Arnauld d'), II : 478. III : Allier (Raoul), I: 240. II: 304, 142 327, 330, 482. III : 96, 121, 122, Andrade (Manoel Freire de), II: 55 Andrée (Sister), I: 420 274, 275, 277, 279, 283 Almeida (Manoel d'), II: 54 Andrew (St.), I: 53 Almenaras (Mgr), III: 426 Andrew (Fr.). See Boulanger Alméras (Anne-Marie d'), I: 524. (Andrew) Andrew (Dom), II: 54, 55, 210 III: 235, 239 Alméras (Jean d'), I: 524 Angebault (William), III: 448 Alméras (Madeleine d'), I: 524 Angeli (Brother), II: 3 Alméras (Marguerite d'), I: 524 Angélique (Mother). See Arnauld Alméras (Marguerite Fayet, dame (Marie-Angelique) d'), I: 524 Angennes (Charles d'). See Fargis Alméras (Marie Leclerc, dame d'), Angennes (Claude d'), I: 248 Angers, I: 136, 270, 294, 295, 343, I: 524 Alméras (Pierre d'), I: 524 350, 361, 385, 405-411, 418, 419, Alméras (René d'), (father), I: 2, 421, 422, 424, 461, 546. II : 138, 147, 449, 452, 459, 493. III: 4, 294, 524 Alméras (René d'), (son), I: 38, 158, 239, 242, 273, 403, 429, 448. See Arnauld, Henri 294, 372, 422, 423, 429, 431, 470, Angiboust (Barbe), I: 339, 348, 381, 382, 402-404, 418, 422, 432, 471, 473, 474, 477, 478, 487, 488, 490, 492, 524, 527, 542, 603, 606, 449, 450, 451. II : 322, 436 Angiboust (Cécile), I : 339, 407 607. II: 6, 13, 15, 116, 220, 268, 407, 410, 430, 463. III: 6, 7, Angoulême, I: 322, 606. II: 148, 235, 278, 331, 355, 378, 401, 479, 480 162. III: 31, 38, 39 Alorges (Marie), III: 221, 224, 225 Angoulême (Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte, duchess of), III : 470, 487 Angoumois (Philippe d'), III : 271 Amaury (Mr.), III: 231 Amaury (Claire-Marie), I: 137. III : 229, 237 Angran (Louis), III : 159, 160 Anjou, II : 400, 459. III : 314 Anjou (Père d'), III : 167 Anjou (Philippe, duke of), III : 76, Amaury (Jeanne-Catherine), III: 254 Amaury (Jeanne-Françoise), III: 236 Annat (François), III: 86, 87, 164, Amboule, II: 73, 101 168

Anne of Austria, Queen of France, I: 270–272, 302, 303, 320, 323, 324, 325, 326, 329, 361, 380, 432-433, 456, 524, 542, 571, 572, 607. II : 134, 136–138, 142–144, 150, 161, 226, 229, 241, 243, 247, 272, 294, 371, 387, 411, 435-438, 443, 444, 448, 455, 456, 496. III : 70, 72, 74-76, 78-84, 86, 87, 90-93, 96, 97, 100, 102, 107, 109, 148, 187, 199, 205, 206, 208, 210, 211, 226, 230, 238, 242, 246, 247, 251, 273, 284, 293, 314, 379-381, 400 Anne (of Bavaria), I: 335 Anneçy, I: 86, 88, 141, 501, 552-556. II: 2, 44, 163, 171, 174, 176. III : 43, 209, 210, 230, 240, 261 Anosy (or Antanosy), II : 52, 55, 56, 87, 89 Ans, III: 449 Anse (Marie Lambert d'), III: 90 Anthony (Mark), II: 457 Antonin de la Paix, II: 361. III: 112 Antony, II: 457. III: 96, 97 Antwerp, III: 379 Aosta, II: 389 Apelles, II: 199 Apennines, III: 48 Apollo, II: 198, 199 Apremont (Jean d'), seigneur de Vendy. See Vendy Arabia, II: 198 Arachné, II: 199 Aragon, I: 3 Aranc. I: 76 Arboy (M. d'), II: 399 Archimedes, I: 31, 36 Arcis-sur-Aube, I: 548 Arcy (Père d'), II : 325, 327, 328-329 Ardilliers (Notre-Dame des), Saumur, I: 404, 406. III: 305 Argenson (René de Voyer d'), I: 289, 324, 311, 315, 316, 329. III : 96–99, 274, 275–279, 290 Argenson (Hélène de la Font, dame d'), I: 240 Argenteuil, I: 163, 269, 338. III: 384 Arimondo (Luc), II: 20, 22 Arisaig, II: 38 Aristotle, II: 197 Arles, I: 152, 256, 304. III: 36 Armagnac (Princesse Françoise-Adélaide de Noailles, comtesse d'), III: 423, 456 Arnauld (Antoine), III: 90, 115, 121, 140, 141, 145-151, 163-166, 169, 175, 178, 180, 181

Arnauld (Henri), III: 158 Arnauld (Marie-Angélique), I: 135, 334, 367. II : 423, 445, 473-475, 477, 478, 480-482, 484. III : 167 Arnoul (Marand-Ignace), II: 106, 110 Arpajon, II: 460 Arpaud (Maurice), II: 164, 171 Arras, I: 126, 269, 372, 385, 452-453, 523. II: 392, 441, 499. IĬĬ: 403 Arsenal (The), Paris, II: 444 Art-sur-Meurthe, II: 367 Artois, II: 392 Asnières, I: 207, 269. III: 403 Ath, I: 522 Athanase (Père), III: 217 Atri (Geneviève d'Attichy, duchesse d'), I: 187 Attichy (Achille d'), II: 186 Attichy (Anne d'). See Maure (Comtesse de) Attichy (Antoine d'), I: 187 Attichy (Geneviève d'). See Atri Attichy (Henriette d'), I: 187 Attichy (Louis d'), I: 186 Attichy (Madeleine d'), I: 186, 187 Attichy (Octavien d'), I: 186 Attichy (Vallence de Marillac, dame d'), I: 182, 186 Aubagne, II: 325 Aube, I: 274 Aubert (François), I: 539 Aubervilliers, I: 196 Aubray (Thérèse d'), III: 269 Aubry (M.), II: 211 Aubry (Présidente), III: 220 Auch, I: 252. III: 402 Audiat (Louis), I: 577 (Lieutenant-general), Audry II: 415 Auguste, II : 137, 138 Augustine (St.), I: 88, 168. II: 197, 201. III: 166 Aulent (Charles), II: 371 Aumale, I: 154. III: 31 Aumône, II: 153 Aumont Marguerite Herault-Cheverny, (Marquise d'), III : 171, 172, 231, 232, 244 Aunis, I: 322 Austria, III : 148 Auteuil, I : 269 Authier de Sisgau (Christophe d'), I: 555. II: 175, 176, 181, 325, 330. III: 260-264 Autun, I: 187. III: 403

Auvergne, I: 182. II: 130, 131, 133. III: 4, 17, 36, 209

INDEX

Avagne, III: 53 Avançon, II: 433 Avenel (Vicomte Georges d'), I: 250 Avignon, I: 32, 34-36, 39, 252, 555. II: 207, 248. III: 260, 287, 4⁰³ Avranches, I: 559 Avrigny (Robillard d'), II: 257 Ay, III: 41 Azerailles, II: 392 Azevedo (Antonio d'), II: 54

в

Babeur (Jean), III: 123 Babylon, I: 33. III: 263 Baccigalupo (Stephano), II: 19 Bagard (Catherine), I: 423 Bagni (Nicholas), II: 14, 15, 58. III: 273, 288, 391 Baignolz (Charles Camus de) II: 153 Bailleul (Nicholas de), II: 460. III: 254 Bailleul (Elizabeth Mallier, dame de), I: 183, 238, 292. III: 255 Bailly (Barbara), I: 448 Bailly (Philip), I: 366 Baïus (Michael) (Le Bay), III: 114, 145, 153, 174 Bajoue (Emerand), I: 497, 595. III: 41 Balan, I: 573 Baliano (Peter-Paul), I: 497 Balzac (Jean-Louis Guez, sieur de), II: 153 Bapaume, II: 392 Bar-le-Duc, II: 371, 379-381, 384, 389. III: 316 Bar (Catherine de), II: 390 Baradat (Henri de), I: 607 Barat (Nicolaïte), I: 51 Barat (Nemeric), I: 530 Barault (M. de), II: 131 Barbara (Sister), I: 466 Barbara (Sister), de Saint-Leu, I: 344 Barbara (Sister), de Saint-Nicolas, I: 336 Barbara (Sister). See Angiboust (Barbe) Barbarigo (Gregorio, Cardinal), II: 168 Barbier (Louis), II: 229 Barbarini (Antonio, Cardinal), I: 482. II: 2, 5 Barbary, I: 15, 27, 28, 29, 36, 40, 80, 128, 130, 480, 511, 562, 569,

608. II: 52, 223, 330, 337, 340, 341, 344, 345, 351, 357, 361, 364, 365, 395. III : 272, 280, 282, 285, 298, 300, 328, 354, 364, 437, 485 Barbuise, I: 549 Barcelona, I: 119 Barcos (Martin de), I: 479. III: 115-117, 123, 129, 133, 142, 143, 145, 180, 409, 476 Barillon (Henri de), III: 392 Barnabas (St.), I: 265 Barny (Georges), II: 246 Barra (Island), II: 38 Barreau (M.), Coadjutor of Sarlat, II: 145 Barreau (John), II: 348, 350, 351, 354-35. Barry (Edmond), II: 3, 32, 35 Bartolini (D., Cardinal), III: 466 Baschet de Mézériac (Françoise), I : 79 Bassancourt (Balthazar Brandon, Abbé de), I: 307, 595 Bassompierre (François, Baron de), I: 61, 328. III: 213 Bassompierre (Louis de), II: 227 Bastille (La), Paris, II: 442, 462. III: 179 Basville, I: 489 Batiffol (Louis), II: 12 Batignoles-Monceaux, I: 55 Batterel (Louis), I: 50 Baucher (Catherine), I: 448 Baudouin (Anne-Jacqueline), III: 236 Baudouin (Jean), I: 46 Baudrand (Claude), III: 168 Bauduy (François), II: 11 Bauffes (Jean), I: 10 Baunard (Mgr Louis), I: 389. II: 260 Bausset (Pierre de), II: 326, 328 Bayart (Charles), I: 594, 595 Bayeux, II: 129, 130, 146. III: 402, 403, 423 Bayle (Antoine), I: 129 Bayonne, I: 16. II: 116, 124, 145, 226, 228. III: 113, 114, 155, 212, 296, 476. See Dolce Bazas, I: 252. III: 429 Bazoches, I: 460. II: 419, 426 Béarn, I: 1 Beaubourg, II: 457. III: 96 Beaucaire, I: 28, 152 Beauchet-Filleau (Dom Henri), I: 117. II: 409, 457. III: 272 Beaufort (François de Vendôme, Duc de), II: 459, 462, 465, 468, 472. III: 74

Beaufort (Françoise de Lorraine, Duchesse de), I : 293	Béon (Bernard de), I : 322 Béon (Louise de), I : 322
Beauharnais (Jean-Jacques de), I:	Berceau de St. Vincent-de-Paul, I:
314 Beaumais ('The Paris Haber-	3-4. III: 453 Bergamo, II: 168
dasher'), II : 185	Berger (Councellor Clerk to the
Beaumont, I: 54	Parliament), I: 95
Beaumont (Anne-Catherine de), I:	Bergères-les-Vertus, I: 215
136, 191–193. III : 191, 194,	Bergier (Nicolas-Sylvestre), I: 310
229, 231	Bergier (Nicolas-Sylvestre), I: 310 Bernard (St.), II: 209, 223, 316
Beaumont (Hardouin de Perefixe,	Bernard (Claude), III: 97
Abbé de). See Perefixe	Bernay, I: 337, 385, 449, 451
Beaumont (Pierre de), I: 540, 542,	Bernières (Charles Maignart de), II :
585, 587–588, 590	403-407, 408, 423. III : 273, 275
Beaune, II : 154 Beauregard (Marie Cabriello, de)	Bernières-Louvigny (Jean de), III : 288
Beauregard (Marie-Gabrielle de), III: 239	Berry, II: 485
Beauvais, I: 103, 105, 153, 213-	Berry (Mario-Caroline, Duchesse de)
214, 226, 256, 257, 263, 269, 361,	III : 444
452. II: 124, 176. III: 158,	Bertaut (Madeleine-Eugenie), III:
260. See Potier	213, 227
Beauvais, M. de, III: 423, 456	Berthe (Thomas), I: 440, 444, 445,
Beauvais (Collège de), Paris, III:	492, 493, 496, 526, 556. II : 3, 6,
410 D	7, 9, 11–13, 46, 407, 410. III :
Beauvaises, I: 219 Beauvau (Marcuia Harri da) II:	122, 397 Portholdi (Coorgen Francois) III:
Beauvau (Marquis Henri de), II:	Bertholdi (Georges-François), III:
367 Beauveau (Mlle de), III : 423	451, 452 Bertier (Pierre de), III : 400
Bécan (Martin), II : 186	Bertin (Père), Oratorian, I : 157
Becks (Peter), III: 465	Berty (Adolphe), I: 47
Bécu (Benoit), I : 533	Bérulle (Pierre, Cardinal de), I: 43,
Bécu (Jean), I: 533, 488, 491. II:	44, 50-54, 57, 59, 65, 70, 71, 74,
371, 382. III : 38 Bédacier (Pierre), II : 136	89-92, 157, 182, 244, 245. II:
Bédacier (Pierre), II : 136	175. III: 114, 273, 347, 354,
Béguin (Denis), I: 413	355, 307
Belgium, I: 522, 523. II: 116 Belin (M.), I: 116, 151, 153, 225	Beryta, III : 289 Besamcon III : 450
Belin (Anne-Françoise), III : 226	Besançon, III : 459 Besse (Pierre de), II : 198, 202, 212,
Bellanger (Pierre), I: 539	213
Bellebarbe (M. de), II : 57, 58, 69,	Besson, III : 130
78, 79	Bethany, I: 160
Bellegarde (Octave de), III: 145	Betharram, I: 606, 607
Belle-Isle en Mer, I: 60, 247, 365,	Bethlehem, 1: 390. III: 48
385, 460. II : 493	Bethune (Henri de), III: 155
Belleville, I: 163 Belleville (Mathurin de), II: 64 of	Beuvardes, III : 32 Beuvier (Denice) I : 80
Belleville (Mathurin de), II : 94, 95, 106, 113	Beynier (Denise), I: 83 Beynier (Jean), I: 74, 80–81, 86, 88
Belley, I: 94. III: 473. See	Béziers, I: 121
Camus (Pierre)	Bicêtre, II : 273, 275, 277, 297
Bellingan (M.), III: 91	Bichi (Alessandro, Cardinal), II: 2,
Bence (Jean), I: 54, 74, 91	9
Benedict (St.), I : 589. III : 20 Benedict XIII, Pope, III : 401, 419,	Bidache, I: 16
	Bievre, III : 211
420, 421, 455, 456	Bignon (Jerôme), I : 172. II : 241.
Benedict XIV, Pope, I: 498. III:	III: 116, 127 Binsfeld (Peter) II: 186
408, 409, 415, 418, 422. <i>See</i> Lambertini	Binsfeld (Peter), II: 186 Bioley, I: 79
Benevento, III: 421, 455	Biscot (Jeanne), II : 254
Bening (François), II : 207, 208	Biserta, II : 338, 342, 346, 349, 362
Bény, II : 395	Bissy (Henri, Cardinal de), I: 603

Blampignon (Claude de), II: 124. 128, 157, 140, 153. III: 185, 273 Blancs-Manteaux (Les), Paris, II: 239, 242 Blanzac, II: 51, III: 39 Blatiron (Étienne), I: 490, 491, 492, 550–551. II: 4, 16–25, 147, 164, 172, 194–195. III : 47, 56–58, 371 Bléneau, II: 459 Blois, I: 252. II: 179. III: 403 Blondel (Canon), I: 67 Blosset (Mlle de), I: 316 Bocconi (Domenico), II: 23 Bodin (Eugène), I: 42 Boethius, II: 204 Bohemia, III : 451 Bohéries, II : 49 Boileau-Despréaux (Nicholas), I: 321. II: 208. III: 476 Boinvilliers, I: 256 Boissel (Dom), I: 582, 583, 584 Boissy, II: 490 Boissy-le-Sec, II: 490 Bollain (Anne-Marie), III: 123, 172, 197, 221, 222, 224, 225, 227 Bonal (Raymond), I: 551 Bonald (Louis-Jacques, Cardinal de), III: 453, 460 Bonaventure (St.), II: 201, 202. III: 146 Bonhomme (Noël), II: 284 Bonne, II: 389 Bonneau (Jacques), seigneur de Rubelle, I: 314 Bonneau-Avenant (Alfred, Comte de), I: 314, 327, 328. III: 81 Bonnefons (Amable), I: 276, 282. II: 80, 126, 306, 307 Bonnet (Jean), I: 293. III: 404, 411, 413, 414, 415, 416, 419, 422, 423, 424, 433, 456 Bonneville, III: 116 Bons-Enfants (Collège des), Paris, I: 38, 144–147, 150, 152, 153, 155, 159, 164, 165, 176, 177, 192, 257, 259, 263, 267, 388, 511, 512, 514, 525, 527, 544. II : 20, 122, 147, 150, 170, 171, 174, 176, 177, 184, 189, 316, 333, 450. III: 1, 19, 28, 31, 115, 116, 140, 141, 173, 179, 260, 297, 312, 317, 318, 320 Borda (Société de), I: 11 Bordeaux, I: 16, 26, 27, 44, 119, 121, 122, 176, 252, 253, 260, 263. II: 116, 120, 147, 171, 212, 236, 458, 495, 499. III : 31, 35, 38, 111, 318, 429. See Béthune Boré (Eugène), III: 474.

Borguny (Pierre), II: 360 Bosquet (François de), I: 604. II: 227, 245, 246. III: 123 Bossebœuf (L.-A.), I: 538, 539, 540, 542 Bosside (Vincent), II: 248 Bossuet (Jacques-Bénigne), I: 518, 607. II: 123, 124, 128, 137-141, 143, 144, 146, 147, 151, 153, 213, 221, 224. III : 273, 348, 402, 406 Bottini (Mgr J.-B.), III: 402 Bouchateau (M.), I: 322 Boucher (Denis), II: 261 Boucher (Jean), II : 211 Boucher (Léonard), I : 497. II : 370, 379-381. III: 315 Boucher (Louise), I: 457 Boucher (Philippe-Ignace), I: 126, 127 Bouchet (Lawrence), II: 153, 155 Bouchour (Claude), I: 83 Bouclier (Guillaume), III: 382 Boudignon (Jean-Baptiste), III: 335 Boudon (Henri-Marie), I: 324 Bougaud (Mgr Louis-Emile), I: 86. III: 143, 348, 475, 476, 494, 496 Bougival, III: 382 Bouhours (Dominique), II: 209 Bouillon, II: 468 Bouillon (Godefroy-Maurice de la Tour, Duc de), II: 303, 463. III: 245 Bouillon (Louise de la Tour, demoiselle de), III: 187 Bouilly, I: 274 Boulages, I: 274, 275 Boulanger (André), II: 213 Boulart (François), II: 243 Boulier (M.), II: Boulogne-sur-Mer, II: 146, 153, 176, 208, 227, 235. III: 155, 400, 403. See Perrochel Boulogne (near Paris), II: 472 Boulogne (Etienne-Antoine de), I: 128, 129, 130 Boult-sur-Suippes, II: 425 Bouquet (Geneviève), I: 236 Bourbon (Island) (now Reunion), II: 57 Bourbon (Françoise de), I: 570 Bourbon (Henri de), II : 136, 232, 383, 384 Bourbon (Guillaume), III: 265 Bourcier (Françoise-Geneviève), III: 255 (Toussaint), I: Bourdaise 461. II: 85, 94, 97, 101, 103, 106, 108, 109, 111-113

Bourdeilles (François de), I: 21. Bremond (Henri, Abbé), I: 310. III: 472 II: 223. III: 94, 143, 383 Bourdet (Étienne), I: 553. Breslay (René de), I: 545, 548 II:Bresse, I: 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 90, 93. 371 Bourdet (Jean), I: 550, 582, 586, III: 473 587, 590-591. II: 30, 31 Bressuire, I: 325 Bourdin (M.), II: 125, 147 Brétaudeau (Leon), I: 58 Bourdoise (Adrien), I: 50-53, 70, Bretonvilliers (Alexandre le Ragois 195, 244, 246, 255, 257, 258, 263, de), III: 9, 178, 268–270 416. II : 160, 163, 175, 176, 177-Bretonvilliers (Madame de), II: 486 179, 213, 222. III : 4, 115, 257-Brévedent (Thomas), III: 122 260, 490 Brial, I: 598 Bourdon (Sebastien), III: 382-Bridzicka (Madame), II: 49 383 Brie (La), I: 62 Bourdon (a parish priest of Havre), Brie-comte-Robert, I: 34, 552. II: 11, 457, 487. III : 281 Brie (Charlotte de). See Bullion III: 260 Bourdonnet, II: 262 Brienne-le-Château, I: 440. Bourgois (Jean), II: 6. III: 169 II: Bourges, I: 47, 252. III: 195, 423, 436 Brienne (Henri-Auguste de Lo-474 Bourgogne (Hôtel de), Paris, II: menie, comte de), I: 322. III: 474, 486 96 Bourgoing (François), I: 51, 54, 74. Brienne (Louise de Béon, Comtesse II: 176, 179. III: 230 de), I: 293, 305, 306, 322, 323, Bourguignon (Claude), I: 250 440. III: 90 Bourin (Léon-Isidore), III: 382 Brières, II: 490 Bousquet (Casimir), I: 129 Brignoles, II: 330 Bousquet (E.), I: 604, 606 Brisacier (Jacques-Charles), III: Boussordec (Charles), II: 103, 104, 404 Brisacier (Laurent de), I: 327, 479, 107, 111 Bouthillier (Claude-Françoise 487. II: 292, 293. III: 273 Machecop, Dame), III: 216 Brittany, I: 62, 439, 582, 583, 586, 590. III : 14, 19, 43, 100, 209 Brocard (Elizabeth), II : 437 Bouthillier (Nicolas), I: 126. III: 123, 410 Boutin (Abel), I: 28 Broglie (Emmanuel de), III: 475 Bouvard (Charles), III: 72, 76, Brou (Madame de), I: 293, 449 78 Brousse (Jacques), III: 159, 160 Bouvard (Françoise-Augustine), III: Broussel (Pierre), II : 443, 465, 472 Brugière (Sébastien), II: 354 235 Bouvard (Marie-Augustine), III: Brulard (Charles), II: 241 235, 242, 243, 246 Brunand, I: 79, 88 Boyle (Patrick, C.M.), II: 38, 40 Brunet (Emmanuel), I: 276 Bra, III: 62, 63 Brunet (François), I: 129. II: 334 Brachet (Anne), I: 307 Brunet (Jean-Joseph), II: 4. III: Bragelogne (Mme de), I: 183, 293 35, 434, 452 Braine, II: 401, 415 Bruni (Giuseppe), III: 451 Brancaccio (Franceso Mario, Car-Brussels, II: 389 dinal), III: 49 Bruyères, II : 390 Brandon (Philibert de), I: 594. Bruyères-le-Bhâtel, II: 151 II: 124, 146, 227. III: 273, 283 Bryan (Gerald), I: 497, 550, 601-603. II: 30, 32, 34, 35 Buckingham (George Villiers, Duke Brassac (Jean de Galard de Bearn, Comte de), III : 271 Brault (Marie), I: 539 of), III: 81, 82 Bréauté (Catherine-Angelique de), Bucquet (Claude), I: 310 III: 255 Buenans, I: 75 Bréauté (Marie de Fiesque, Dame Buffalo (Palazzo), Rome, II: 5 de), III : 254 Bugey, I: 76 Breda, III : 50 Buglose (N.-D. de), Pouy, I: 5, 9, Bredonique (in Scotland, not iden-11, 15, 123. III : 455, 468, 469, tified), 39 490

INDEX

Buissoncourt, II: 367 Buissot (Nicolas), I: 533 Bulles, I: 219, 221 Bullion (Charlotte de Brie, dame de), I: 79, 390 Burgundy, II: 130 Bus (César de), I: 250 Busée (Jean), I: 226. III: 6, 7, 355 Bussière, II : 14 Bussy (M. de), II: 414 Buzay, II: 125. See Gondi (Jean-Francois-Paul de) Buzenval (Renée-Marie de), III: 239 Buzet (Haute-Garonne), I: 20, 23 Buzet-sur-Baïse, I: 20

С

Cabral (Pedro de Almeida), II: 54 Cabuchet (Emilien), I: 94. III: 473 Cadillac, I: 26 Caen, I: 289. II: 176. III: 196, 288 Cahors, I: 180, 380, 385, 457, 458, 488, 559-562, 595. II : 162, 172-174, 176, 188, 189, 227, 235, 449, 493, 494, 495. III : 28, 36, 92, 155, 400, 403, 405 Caigne (François), I: 164. See Solminihac (Alain de) Caignet (Nicolas), I: 602 Caillou (Geneviève), I: 408 Caithness (County of), II: 38 Cajot, seigneur de Brunand, I: 79 Calais, I: 461. II: 45, 208, 435, 438–440 Calmet (Augustin), I: 529. III: 490 Calon (Louis), I: 153. III: 31, 42 Calvaire (N.-D. du), I: 606. III: 271 Calvin (John), II: 93. III: 113, 117, 139, 158, 166 Cambrai, I: 252 Campo di Loro, III : 54, 55 Camus (Antoinette). See Marillac (Antoinette de) Camus (Jean-Pierre), Bishop of Belley, I: 87, 88, 178, 184, 187, 190–194. II: 197, 199–200, 206, 209, 213 Camus (Marguerite), I: 178, 246 Canada, I: 314, 326, 421. II: 395 Canary (the Islands), II: 116 Canisius (St. Peter), III: 464

Canna (Isle of), II: 37 Cap-Breton, III: 319 Capefigue (Jean-Baptiste-Honoré-Raymond), II : 263, 264 Cape Verde, II: 60 Carcassonne, I: 579 Carcireux (Françoise), I: 458, 459. II: 291 Cardinal Lemoine (Collège du), à Paris, I: 146 Caregré (Madame), I: 399 Carignan (Marie de Bourbon, princesse de), III: 187 Carnot (Lazare), I: 41 Caron (Julien), I: 92 Carpentier (Hubert), III: 271 Carré (Claude), I: 405 Carré (Jean-Baptiste), III : 197, 204 Carreiro (Pedro), II: 55 Carrier (Henriette), II: 277 Carthage, II: 352, 357 Caryste, III: 443 Caset (Michel), I: 497. II: 489. III: 278 Cashel, II: 32 Casimir (John), King of Poland, II: 43, 47 Cassel, III: 383 Cassian (John), II: 120 Castel Giuliano, II: 4 Castelferrus, I: 596 Castelsarrasin, I: 595 Castiglione, III: 57 Castres, I: 27 Catalonia, II: 325, 327 Catherine (St.) of Genoa, II: 293 Catherine de Médicis (Queen of France), III: 213 Cauffry, I: 415 Caulet (François-Etienne de), II: 124, 132, 146, 153, 176, 178, 227. III : 121, 123, 124, 132, 155-158, 175-177 Caumartin (François Lefèvre de), III: 142 Caussin (Nicolas), I: 367. III: 199-209 Cavalchini (Carlo Alberto Guidobono), III: 421 Cavallere-Maggiore, III: 63 Cayet (Pierre-Victor Palma), I: 428 Cayla de la Garde (Jean-Félix), III : 458 Cayran, I: 560 Caze (M.), III: 458 Cazet (Sebastien), II: 103, 104, 108, 112 Ceccini (Domenico, Cardinal), III: 160

- Chantilly, I: 329, 433 Cécile-Renée of Austria, I: 333 Chapot (M.), III: 455 Celery, I: 19 Celestine III, Pope, I: 162 Chappe (Chevalier), III: 410 Centeuil (a lawyer), I: 304 Cervini (Mgr), III: 426 Cés (Pierre-Casimir de), III: 402, 407 Cæsar, II: 200 196 Cévennes, III: 33, 273, 304 Chabane (Sister), III : 221 Chaillot, III: 182, 212-214, 224, 227 Chaillou (Madame), III: 217 Chaise-Dieu (La), II : 238, 242 Chalette (Jean), III : 384 Chalon-sur-Saône. See Maupeou 25I (Jean de) Châlons, I: 207, 323, 460. II: 145, 226, 410, 435, 436, 437. III: 32, 41, 158, 403 Chalosse, I: 9 Chalus (Dom Faron), II: 239 Chambéry, I: 526, 555. II: 208 Champagne, I: 19, 93, 215, 225, 500, 503. II: 130, 298, 299, 398-442. III: 40, 91, 167, 271, 459, 479 Champauze, I: 322 Champigny (near Paris), I: 269. II: 490 236 Champigny (Indre-et-Loire), I: 534, 542 Champigny (Honoré de), I: 182 Champin (Omer de), II : 124, 137 Champion (Louis), II: 410 Champion (Maurice), II: 448 Champion (Pierre), III : 19 Champmargou (M. de), II : 99 Chancelade, II: 238 Chandée (Château de), I: 76, 78, 79 Chandenier (Charlotte-Henriette de), III: 249-250 Chandenier (Claude de), I: 518, 519, 525, 526. II : 124, 137, 165, 283, 311. III : 123, 250, 404 Chandenier (Louis de), I: 519, 525, 526. II : 124, 157, 141, 142, 143, 146, 151, 165. III: 7, 273, 283, 391 Chandenier (Marie-Louise de), III: 184, 233, 249–250 Chantal, St. (Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot, Baronne de), I: 86, 134-142, 308, 309, 551, 594. II : 388. III : 186, 194, 195, 198, 210, 220, 472 230, 231–233, 238, 336 Chantal Coulanges, (Marie de Baronne de), III: 231-232 Chantelauze (Régis de), I: 61, 116, 119-122, 128, 129. II: 12, 152. III: 475
 - Chapperon (Nicolas), I: 126 Charbonnières, II : 208 Charente, II: 208 Charenton, II: 212, 445, 462. III: Charité (Hôpital de la), Paris, I: 46, 49. 50 Charlemagne, I: 287 Charles VI, King of France, II: 470 Charles IX, King of France, I: 60, Charles X, King of France, III: 441, 445 Charles I, King of England, II: 446. III: 212 Charles IV, Duc de Lorraine, II: 368, 415, 428, 461, 462, 468, 472 Charles Borromeo (St.), I: 262, 465. II: 209. III: 12, 308 Charles-Emmanuel II (Duke of Savoy), I: 330, 555 Charles Gustavus, King of Sweden, II: 43, 47 Charlet (Etienne), I: 70 Charlet (Madeleine-Elizabeth), III: Charleville, II: 431, 495 Charmes, III: 43 Charmoise (Anne), I: 305 Charon (Denis), III: 405 Charonne, I : 301, 307 Charpentier (F.), I: 543 Charpentier (Hubert), I: 487, 606 Charpentier (Pierre), I: 438 Charrier (Abbé), II: 11 Charron (Pierre), I: 46 Chars, I: 324, 364, 366, 436-438. III: 171 Charton (Jacques), I: 485. III: 86, 151, 152, 222 Chartres, I: 105, 169, 256, 263, 406. II: 131, 155, 163, 227, 496. II: 131, 305 Charvin (G.), II: 242 Chastenai (Baron de), I: 75 Chastenet (Léonard), I: 250, 561-562. II: 173, 189 Chastres, II : 475 Châteaudun, I: 337, 366, 449-450 Château-l'Évêque, I: 21. III: 468, Châteauneuf (Charles de l'Aubépine, Marquis de), III: 232 Châteauneuf (Françoise-Marie de), III: 231–232 Château-Porcien, II: 400, 431 Château-Salins, II: 391

Château-sur-Moselle, II : 391 III: Châtelet (Le), Paris, I: 325. 10 Châtellerault, II: 389 Châtillon-les-Dombes, I: 71–94, 99, 246, 268. III: 354, 418, 423, 468, 472, 474, 489 Chatillon-sur-Loing, I: 330 Chatillon-sur-Marne, 11: 415, 457. III: 96 Châtillon (Gaspard Coligny, Marechal de), III: 77, 89 Châtre-sous-Montlhéry, II: 261 Chaugy (Françoise-Madeleine de), III: 216, 228, 231 Chaumont (Marie de Bailleul, dame de), I: 402. III: 254 Chaumont (Sister M.), III: 183, 254 Chaussée (La), I: 576 Chavanges, I: 275 Chavigny (Anne Phelypeaux, Comtesse de), III: 108 Chavigny (Leon Bouthillier, Comte de), II : 179. III : 108, 142 Chesse (Marie), I: 459 Chétif (Marguerite), I: 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 445, 452-454. III : 392 Chevalier (Madame), I: 293 Chevalier (Alexis), I: 232, 238, 281 Chevalier (Jean-Baptiste), III: 410 Chevalier (Jules), III: 496 Chevalier (Marie-Agnes), III: 254 Chevalier (Ulysse), III: 463 Chevigny (Jacques de Choiseul, Comte de), I: 460 Chevreuse (Claude de Lorraine, duc de), I: 61 Chezal-Benoît, II: 242 Chiavari, III: 53 Chigi (Fabio, Cardinal), III: 160. See Alexander VIII China, I: 278. III: 273, 289 Chinon, I: 539 Chiroye (Jacques), I: 544. III: 45 Chivas, I: 556 Choisy (François-Timoléon, Abbé de), I: 288, 314. II: 303 Choisy (Louise-Angélique de), III : 255 Chollier (Pierre), I: 24. III: 377, 378, 403, 411 Chomel (Claude), III: 32 Chomel (Pierre), I: 549, 556 Christina (St.), III: 232, 243 Christine de France, I: 132. III: 62 Cicero, II: 197 Cimber (Louis), II: 282 Cinq-Mars (Henri de), I: 571

Cistera, II: 4 Citeaux, I: 47. II: 238, 242. III: 132 Claire (Sister), I: 412 Clairet (André), III : 382, 434, 436 Clanranald (The Lord of Uist), II: 38 Claude (Sister), I: 420, 423 Clement II, Pope, I: 128 Clement VI, Pope, I: 162 Clement VIII, Pope, I: 21, 24. III: 134 Clement X, Pope, I: 476, 498 Clement XI, Pope, I: 290. II: 143, 221. III: 102, 154, 407, 413, 419, 488 Clement XII, Pope, III: 424, 426, 455, 463 Clement XIII, Pope, III: 456, 487 Cleopatra, II: 200 Clermond-Ferrand, I: 182. III: 7 Clermont (Collège de), Paris, I: 527 Clermont (François de), I: 607 Cléry, I: 406. III: 127 Clichy, I: 51, 54-59, 63, 67, 75, 93, 99, 144, 154, 269, 536, 538. II : 447, 492. III : 354, 403, 404, 418, 423, 438, 440, 441, 468, 472 Cluny, II : 238, 239, 240, 242 Cocheris (Hippolyte), I: 57 Cochin China, III: 286, 288 Codoing (Bernard), I: 259, 533, 539-540, 543, 553, 554. II : 2, 5, 16, 147, 171. III: 38, 91, 261, 371 Coëffeteau (Nicolas), I: 46. II: 212 Coeffort (N.-D. de), I: 579, 582 Cohen (J.), II: 178 Coislin (Henri-Charles de), II: 142 Colbert (Jacques-Joachim), III: 130, 131, 429 Colbert (Jean-Baptiste), III: 281 Colée (Antoine), I: 530 Colette (Madame), I: 83 Coligny (François de), III: 271 Collet (Pierre), I: 6, 12, 19, 20, 38, 65, 73-75, 105, 109, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 123, 124, 128-130, 144, 145, 322, 335, 526, 528, 529. II: 149, 229, 231, 367, 369, 372, 374, 385, 387, 389, 394, 396, 448, 451, 453, 455-458, 497. III: 4, 86, 111, 122, 130, 143, 267, 346, 398, 422, 475, 476, 480, 486, 487, 494 Collin (Hyacinthe), I: 300 Collot (Pierre), I: 88 Cologne, I: 331 Colombes, I: 338 Colombet (Pierre), III: 82, 83, 159

Colombot (Zacharie), III: 381 Combalet, I: 325 See Combalet (Marquise de). Aiguillon (Duchesse d') Comet (Famille des), III: 383 Comet (M. de), (l'aîné), I: 14-16, 24, 26, 30 Comet (M. de), (le jeune), I: 30, 35-Corto, III: 54 37, 39, 41, 42, 45 Comet (Catherine de), I: 37, 45 Commercy, I: 61 Compaing (Famille), I: 315 Compaing (Elisabeth), I: 294 Compaisières, I: 554 Compiègne, II : 468 Compoin (Claude-Joseph), III: 422, 423 Conception (Convent of the Immaculate), Paris, I: 325 Conciergerie (The), Paris, II: 307, 308 Condé (Charlotte-Marguerite de Montmorency, Princesse de), I: 328, 330. II : 260 Condé (Henry II de Bourbon, Coucy, II: 461 Prince de), I : 328, 329. II : 240, Coudres, II: 14 241. III: 75, 76, 78, 86, 88, 93, 148 Condé (Louis II de Bourbon duc d'Enghien, Prince de), I: 328, 335, 540. II : 213, 277, 428, 440, 443, 457-465, 468, 469, 472. III : 75, 89, 100 Condomois, I: 532 Condren (Charles de), I: 250, 488, 522. II: 170, 175, 254. III: 264-266, 273, 326 Conflans, II: 208 Connart, II: 48 Conrard (Jean), II: 367. III: 84 Constant (Charles), III: 83 Constantinople, I: 28, 32, 177. II: 354, 360 Conti (Anne-Marie Martinozzi, Princesse de), II: 303. III: 195, 23 Conti (Armand de Bourbon, Prince de), I: 315, 320, 328, 329. II: 240, 458. III: 100, 245, 273, 398, 400 Coqueret (Jean), I: 95, 485. II: 264 183. III : 1, 152, 330 Creil, I: 219 Corbeil, II: 461, 476, 487 Lesdiguières Corbie, II: 369 Corbinelli (Giovanni), I: 61. III: 490 Corblet (Jules), I: 310 Cordenod (Philippe), I: 75, 76 Cordes (Denis de), I: 482 Cordon (Jacques de), I: 554 II: 207, 208 VOL. III.-2 M

Cormeilles-en-Parisis, I: 163 Cornaire (Guillaume), I: 285 Corneille (Pierre), III: 84 Cornet (Nicolas), I: 183. III: 152 Cornuau, M., III: 471 Cornuel (Claude), II: 320 Cornuel (Guillaume), III: 122, 129 Corsica, I: 20. III: 54-58, 432 Cosimo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, III: 405, 406, 460 Cospeau (Philip), I: 46, 47. III: 72, 73, 78, 86, 148, 238, 273 Cossart (Jean-François), III: 461 Cossé (Hôtel de), Paris, III : 194 Costa (Custodia da), II: 54, 55 Coste (Hilarion de), I: 179 Coste (Pierre), I: 2, 4, 20, 58. II: 310. III : 383, 469, 471 Cothereau (Claude), I: 163 Cotolendi (Ignazio), III: 289 Coton (Pierre), II: 207, 213 Cottret (Pierre), I: 130. III: 443 Couarde (La), III: 289 Couderon (M.), II: 95 Coudroy (Marie-Claire de), III: 234 Coulanges (Famille de), III: 215 Coulanges (Christophe de), I: 265 Coulomb (François), III: 123 Coulommiers, I: 330 Coulommiers (François de), II: 439 Couplier (M.), II: 109 Courbeteaux, I: 576 Courboin, I: 113 Courtain, M., III: 174 Courtin (Abbé), 50, 51, 53, 244–248, 252, 258, 259. II: 160, 161. 252, 258, 259. III : 257, 258 Cousinot (Geneviève), III: 235 Coussay, II: 238 Coutances, I: 25 Couty (Jean), III: 407, 409, 410, 411, 413, 414, 415, 419, 426, 429, 430, 456, 463 Cracow, I: 442, 445, 527, 549, 601. II: 42, 49. III: 368 Crécy-en-Brie, I: 488, 500, 556-559, 602, 603. II : 162. III : 22, 170, Créqui (Charles, duc de). See Crespières, I: 419 Crétineau-Joly (Jacques), III: 491 Crévic, II : 367 Crichant (M.), III : 231 Crillon (Louis Berton, Seigneur de),

INDEX

Croiset (M.), I: 304 Croix-Rouge (Quartier de la), Paris, III: 441 Cromwell (Oliver), II: 39, 396, 497. III: 490 Crosnes, I: 217, 218 Croucel, I: 547 Croulbois (Jules), III: 316 Croze (Anne de), I: 307. III: 404 Crowley (Donald), I: 471. II: 410, 428 Cuissot (Gilbert), I: 491, 560, 595. III: 38 Cupif (Robert), II: 234 Cyprian (St.), II: 357 Czartoryski (Florian-Casimir), II: 45

D

Daffis (Jean), III: 155 Daisne (Chretien), I: 497. III: 306 Dalmagne (Jeanne), I: 414-415 Damery, II: 415 Damiens (Gabriel), II: 19 Damiette (Michelle), II: 262 Dammartin, II: 400, 461 Dampierre (Francois de Cugnac, Marquis de), III: 228 Dampierre (Gabrielle Popillon du Riau, Marquise de), III: 228, 229, 244 Damville (François-Christophe de Levis-Ventadour, duc de), I: 540 Dan (Pierre), I: 29 Daniel (Charles), III: 200 Danjou (F.), II: 282 Dans. See Anse (Mlle de) Danzig, I: 447. II: 46 Darche (Jean), I: 250, 263. III : 257 Dassonval (Jean), I: 550 Daudet (Jean-François), III: 434, 436 Daullier (Pierre), III: 404 Daumar, II: 476 Dauphin (Fort). See Fort-Dauphin Dauphiné, II : 147, 208. III : 38, 406 Dauteuil (Marthe), I: 439, 440 Daux (Camille), I: 596, 597 Dauzenat (M.), III: 133 Daveroult (Pierre), II: 110, 111, 112 David, King, I: 466. II: 202, 223. III: 72, 295 David (Jean), II: 84, 488

Dax, I: 1-3, 7, 9-11, 20, 36-37. III: 155, 317, 319, 351, 403, 423, 429, 469. See Desclaux Deblaye (Abbé), II: 369, 372, 382, 388, 389, 392 Dedun (Gérard), I: 126 Deffita (Madeleine). See Viole (Mlle) Degert (Antoine), I: 11, 251, 255. II: 178. III: 383 Dehorgny (Jean), I: 38, 368, 448, 466, 470, 471, 488, 490, 492, 500, 530. II: 4-6, 13, 16, 375-377, 381. III: 169, 170, 180, 394, 395 Dejean (Etienne), II: 134 Delattre (Guillaume), I: 593 Delauney (Christophe), II: 104, 105, 107, 110 Delestoile (Jean-Baptiste), II: 371 Delettre (Abbé), I: 211 Delville (Guillaume), I: 395, 453. III: 22, 298 Démia (Charles), I: 74 Demonchy (Nicolas), I: 497. II: 139 Demosthenes, II: 200 Demurard (M.), II: 310 Déniat, III: 46 Denis (Dom Paul), I: 250. II: 238, 240, 241 Denis de la Mère-de-Dieu (Pere). II: 239 Denoual (Anne), I: 458 Denville, II : 261 Derieux (Sister Mary), III: 473 Desbiey (L.-M.), III: 381 Desbordes (Renée), I: 307 Desbordes-Goder (M.), I: 517. II: 287 Deschamps (Edme), II: 84, 410. 427, 489 Desclaux (Jacques), I: 520. III: 155 Descourtils (Adrien), I: 164 Descourveaux (Philibert), III: 259 Desdames (Guillaume), II: 41-43, 45, 47, 48, 50. III : 368 Des Hugonieres (Philiberte), I: 83 Des Isles (Nicolas), III: 9 Des Jardins (Georges), II: 489 Des Jonchères (M. l' Abbé), I: 423 424 Deslandres (Paul), I: 250 Des Lions (Jean), III : 86, 114, 115, 117, 120, 121, 122, 124, 129, 137, 138, 148, 167, 169, 176-177, 263 D'Estrées, Cardinal, III: 410 Desmares (Toussaint), III: 145, 160 Des Marets (Jean), III : 122

Desmay (Chanoine), I: 67 Des Mortiers (Raymond), I: 38. III: 123, 348 Desmottes (Jean-François), III: 381 Desmoulins (Père), I: 80, 111 Des Noyers (Pierre), III: 240 Des Rochers (Mlle), I: 424 Dessert (Marie), II: 394 Desvignes (Priest of the Mission), II: 489 Diaz (Diego), II: 52 Didron (Edouard), III: 378, 379, 382 Dieppe, I: 252, 255. II: 44, 95 Dieppe (Jean), II: 351 Dieuze, II : 389, 391 Diharse (Salvat), I: 16 Dinet (Jacques), I: 572. II: 146, 226, 371. III: 71-78, 86, 155 Diogenes, III: 350 Dissais, III: 124, 139 Divielle (N.-D. de), I: 10 Doinel (Geneviève), I: 439. II: 274 Dol, II: 233 Dolce (Jean), III: 155 Dombes, I: 72 Donchery, II: 425, 431 Donnadieu de Griet (Barthélemy), III: 135 Dorchain (Auguste), III: 84 Dormoy, II: 490 Douai, I: 252 Doublinville, II: 262 Douelle (Françoise), I: 441, 447 Doustrebau (Charles), I: 126 Dover, II: 44, 45. III: 241 Drapier (Joseph-Laurent), I: 32, 33 Drelincourt (Charles), III: 9 Dreux, II: 208 Drouard (Bertrand), I: 305 Drugeon (Madeleine), I: 441 Dubiela (N.-D. de). See Divielle Dubois (Jacques), III: 85 Dubois (Jean), I: 20 Du Bosquet (François), II: 245, 246 Dubourdieu (Jean), II: 410. III: 397 Dubourg (Louis-Guillaume), III: 456 Du Breuil (F.-Jacques), I: 160 Du Castel (Jacques), I: 32 Duchesne (Bernard), I: 257 Duchesne (Jerôme), I: 103, 257 Duchesne (Pierre), I: 488, 491, 599-600. II : 31 Duchesne (René), I: 105

Ducoudray (François), I: 152, 153, 157, 158, 470, 550. II: 1, 160, 325-328, 330, 370, 374, 375. III : 33, 34, 36 Ducournau (Bertrand), I: 37, 38, 39. II: 447, 448, 453. III: 15, 16, 346-347, 351-352, 389, 393, 478 Dudon (Paul), I: 17 Du Fay (Isabelle), I: 198, 222, 298, 299, 300 Du Ferrier (Jean), I: 522. II: 170, 178 Dufestel (François), I: 550. II: 330 Dufour (Antoine), III: 386 Dufour (Claude), II: 84, 94, 95, 96-98, 100, 106, 112, 147, 156 Du Fresne (M.), III: 191-122, 217-218, 220 Du Fresne (Charles), I: 91. III: 319 Du Fresne (Mlle), I: 222, 293 Duggan (Dermot), II: 30, 36, 37, 38 Du Hamel (Henri), II: 484. III: 163 Duhamel (M.), Priest of the Mission, II : 553, 554 Du Marché (François), I : 419 Du Maretz (Jean), I: 391 Dumas (Pierre), I: 250 Dumecq (Mme), I: 238, 292 Dunes (Battle of the), II: 400 Dupanloup (Félix), II: 437, 440. III: 494 Du Perron (Jacques), I: 43. II: 606. III: 39 Duperroy (Nicolas), II: 44, 47, 48, 50 Dupleix (Scipion), I: 46 Du Plessis (Christophe), I: 305. II: 293, 485 Du Plessis-Praslin (César de Choiseul, Comte de), II : 400, 401 Dupont (Jean), III : 220, 222, 470 Duport (Nicolas), II: 22, 23, 84 Dupuich (François), I: 550 Dupuis (Michel), II : 378, 381 Durand (Antoine), I: 478-479, 600. II: 46, 47. III: 89, 123, 408 Durazzo (Cardinal Stefano), II: 15, 16, 18, 21, 164, 194-196. III : 53, 391 Du Rivau (M.), I : 95 Durot (Nicolas), I: 533, 534. III: 38 Durtal, II: 451, 456 Dusaray (Charles), III: 412

- Du Sault (Baronne), I: 293
- Du Sault (Jean-Jacques), III: 483

Du Saussay (André), I: 303 Dusin (Dominique), I: 123 Du Tartre (Margaret Augustina), III: 236 Du Vair (Guillaume), II: 197 Duval (André), I: 158, 166, 168, 171, 485. II: 183. III: 116, 117, 128, 151, 330, 367 Du Vigean (Anne de Neubourg, Marquise), I: 293

Е

Écouis, I: 66, 67. III: 418 Écrouves, I: 531 Edelinck (Gerard), III: 378-380 Egypt, I: 32. II: 106 Eigg (Island of), II: 37 Elbène (Barthelemy d'), I: 593 Elizabeth of Austria, Queen, I: 60 Eloi (Saint), I: 73 Embermenil, II: 392 Embrun. See Genlis Emmaus, I: 332. III: 345 Emoro, II: 52 England, I: 322, 524. II: 40, 57. III: 212 Épernon (Jean-Louis de Nogaret de la Valette, Duc d'), I: 26, 224, 249 Epernon (Anne-Louise-Christine d'), I: 333 Épinal, II : 388, 391 Épine, I: 533 Époisses, II : 245, 246 Erlach (Jean-Louis, Baron d'), II: 399 Escart (Pierre), I: 553 Eschaux (Bernard d'), III: 113, 114 Essarts (Les), III: 45 Essarts (Marie de Créqui, Dame des), II : 480, 481 Este (Raynaldo, Cardinal d'), II: 9 Estival en Charnie, I: 296 Estournet (Octave), I: 479, 601, 603 Étampes, I: 269, 324, 380, 460. II: 449, 450, 460, 461, 476, 480, 487-490, 494. III : 403 Etienne (Jean-Baptiste), I: - 94, 290. III : 449 Etienne (Nicolas) II: 111-116. III: 458 Étioles II: 476 Étréaupont, II : 401 Etréchy, II: 460, 476, 489, 490 Eudes (St. John), II: 175, 176, 177 Eudo de Kerlivio (Louis), I: 439

Eulmont, II: 367 Euville, I: 61 Eve, II: 62 Eveillard (Jacques), II: 46, 47 Evreux, I: 66, 234. III: 287, 400

F

Fabert (Abraham de), I: 571. II: 414. III: 99 Fabri (Jean), I: 322 Fabri (Madeleine). See Séguier (Dame) Fagniez (Gustave), I: 250 Faideau (Victor), I: 300 Faillon (Étienne-Michel), I: 304, 522. II: 128, 130-133, 170. III: 4, 5, 17, 97–100, 266–270, 326 Fajemot (Maison de). I: 560 Falguière, I: 598 Falibowski (M.), II: 49 Fanshere, II: 65, 69, 71, 75, 83 Farainvilliers, I: 177 Fargis (Charles d'Angennes, Seigneur du), I: 522-524. III: 114 Fargis (Charles du), I : 523 Fargis (Henriette du), I: 523 Fargis (Madeleine de Silly, Dame du), I : 523 Fargis (Marie du), I: 523 Faure (Charles), I: 166, 168, 169, II: 238, 243, 244, 254. 172. IÍI: 320 Faure (François), I: 607 Favre (Marie-Jacqueline), III: 230-232, 234, 237, 238 Fayet (Nicolas, Seigneur de Souvigny), I: 293 Feillet (Alphonse), I: 212. II: 399, 400, 414, 416, 423, 474. III: 475 Félibien (Père, Capuchin), II: 389 Félibien (André), III: 84 Félibien (Michel), II : 455. III : 98 Feliu y Perez (Bartolome), I : 23 Fénelon (Antoine de Salignac, Marquis de la Mothe), III : 98-100 Fénelon (François de Salignac de la Mothe), III : 102, 348, 406 Féret (Hippolyte), I : 316, 317. II: 485. III: 175, 177, 190, 273 Férolles, II: 457. III: 96 Féron (Alexandre), I: 103. II: 403, 404, 406. III : 275 Férot (Claude), II : 489 Ferre (Clemence), I: 604 Ferreux, I: 548. III: 32 Ferrières-en-Brie, I: 177, 178

- Ferrières-Gâtinais, I: 525 Ferris (Edward), III: 451 Fesch (Joseph, Cardinal), III: 452, 453, 472 Feydeau (Mathieu), I: 307 Feydin (François), I: 497. II: 94, **III, II2** Fiacre (Saint), III: 78 Fiat (Antoine), III: 464, 465, 467 Fidelis of Sigmaringan (St.), III: 42I Fiesque (Guillone d'Harcourt, Dame de), III: 254 Fieulaine, II : 431 Fillon (Benjamin), I: 41, 543 Fillon (Madame Joseph), I: 41 Fiquelmont (René-Louis de), I: 571 Fismes, II: 417 Flacourt (Étienne de), II: 57, 58, 60, 64, 69, 76-79, 81, 83, 103, III Flamignon (Antoine), I: 164 Flanders, I: 229. II: 398, 400. III: 35 Flavigny-le-Grand, II: 401 Fléchier (Esprit), I: 328 Fler (Saint-Germer), II: 242 Fleury (André-Hercule, Cardinal de), III : 423, 456 Fleury (Claude), II : 151 Fleury (Edouard), II: 402, 416, 419, 420, 424, 428, 430 Fleury (François de), II: 43 Fleury (Henri-Claude de, Bishop of Châlons), I: 216, 217 Flin, II: 392 Flisco (Catherine de), III: 427 Florence, I: 49, 60, 248. III: 383, 460 Foissac (Adrien), I: 560-562. II: 173, 188 Foix, I: 17. III: 123 Foix (Pierre, Cardinal de), I: 17 Foix (Vincent), I: 45 Folleville, I: 61, 68-70, 105, 106, 145, 243. II: 307. III: 28, 31, 64, 455, 456, 458, 468, 472 Fontaine, III: 32, 41 Fontaine, II: 490 Fontaine (Daniel), III: 448 Fontaine (Louis), III: 403 Fontainebleau, I: 188, 263, 269, 333, 364, 432, 433, 478. III : 87, 208, 314 Fontaine-Essart (near Courbetaux), I: 576 Fontaines (Pasquier de), II: 110 Fonteines (Louise-Eugénie de), III : 185, 190, 212, 214, 215, 227
- Fontenay-le-Comte, I: 41, 300

- Fontenay-aux-Roses, I: 301, 364, 4¹³ Fontenay-en-Parisis, I: 147
- Fontenay-Mareuil (François du Val,
- Marquis de), II : 13 Fontoux (Joan Boche do), I : 522
- Fonteux (Jean Roche de), I: 532
- Fontgombault, I: 249
- Foran (Mme de), III: 236
- Forbin-Jansson (Toussaint de), I: 568
- Forest (René), II: 84, 85
- Forges-les-Eaux, I: 419. III: 385
- Fort-Dauphin, II: 57, 65–67, 69, 72, 73–84, 86, 87, 90, 92, 95, 97, 99–101, 117
- Fortia (Anne de la Barre, Dame), I: 293
- Fort-Lévesque (The prison of, Paris), II: 307
- Fossano, III: 64
- Fosseyeux (Marcel), I: 233-234, 236
- Fouquet (Elizabeth-Angélique), III: 186
- Fouquet (François, Père), I: 321, 457, 458, 459. III: 215
- Fouquet (François, fils), I: 321, 460, 498, 499, 605. II: 124, 145, 192, 226. III: 115, 273
- Fouquet (Louis), I: 599. II: 124, 146
- Fouquet (Louise-Agnès), III: 250 Fouquet (Madeleine-Augustine), III: 250
- Fouquet (Marie de Maupeou, Dame), I: 239, 240, 292, 321, 459, 598– 599. II: 433. III: 289 Fouquet (Nicolas), I: 360, 460.
- Fouquet (Nicolas), I: 360, 460. II: 297, 460. III: 215, 250
- Fourché (Père), I: 69
- Fourier (St. Peter), II: 239, 387
- Fournier (François), I: 372, 458. II: 495. III: 480, 485
- Fournier (Pierre), II: 393
- Fourvière (at Lyons), III: 454
- Francheville (Mlle de), III: 19
- Francillon (François), II: 341, 348
- Francis (Brother), II: 3
- François (Marguerite), I: 407
- Francis Regis (St.), III: 427, 428
- Francis de Sales (St.), I: 43, 86–88, 114, 132–138, 140, 142, 183, 184, 189, 202, 203, 228, 308, 309, 319, 201, 213, 221. III: 6, 7, 49, 128, 135, 146, 181, 185, 186, 188, 190, 195–197, 212, 213, 215, 219, 220, 226, 228, 234, 235, 238, 240, 243, 288, 328, 348, 354, 355

Francis Xavier (St.), I: 3, 441. II: 51, 59, 74, 77. III: 37 Frances de Paul, I: 466. Franconville, I: 218 Françoys (Simon), III : 377-382 Franqueville (M. de), I : 450 Frederick I of Prussia, I: 331 Freire (Pedro), II : 52, 53 Frémiot (Jeanne-Françoise). See Chantal Frémont (Charles), II: 244-246 Fréneville (Valpuiseaux), I: 438. II: 275, 449, 450. III: 458 Freppel (Charles), III: 465 Fresne, III: 32 Fresne-Forget (M. de), I: 46 Froger (Georges), I: 208. II: 316, 317. III : 222, 273 Froidevaux (Henri), II : /51 Froissart (Jean), I: 77 Frondeville (Henri de), III: 289 Frouard, II: 367 Frouville, I: 307 Fuensaldagne (François Pérez de Vivéro, Comte de), II : 401 Furnes (Marie-Geneviève de), III: 215

G

Gabarra (Jean-Baptiste), I: 10 Gadave (René), I: 17 Gagarin (Ivan), III: 200 Gaillard (C. M.), II: 371 Galand (Françoise-Angélique), III : 255 Gallais (Guillaume), I: 572-575, 580 Gallemand (Jacques), I: 153, 525 Gallet (Guillaume), II: 116 Gallois (Architect), III: 470 Gallot (Thomas), I: 54 Galluis, III: 289, 470 Gamard (Marie-Gertrude), III: 252 Gambart (Adrien), II: 123, 124, 496. III : 172, 185, 273 Gancin (Mnie), III: 220 Gandon (Marc), III: 461 Gannes, I: 68 Ganset (Louis), I: 402-404 Garaison (N.-D. de), I: 532 Garibal (Jean de), III : 290 Garnier (M.), I : 46 Garnier (Sœur), I : 305 Garron (Jean), I: 81 Garron (Scholastique), I: 81 Gascony, I: 3. III: 318 Gaspart (Grégoire), III: 96 Gassion (Pierre de), II: 231

Gastaud (Jacques), I: 54 Gaucher (M.), II: 490 Gaudin (M.), II: 233. III: 79 Gault (Jean-Baptiste), I: 117. II: 324, 325, 326, 328 Gautier (Aubin), II: 29 Gautier (Denis), I: 539, 543, 544 Gautier (Guillaume), I: 32, 33 Gautron (Madeleine), III: 102 Gedoyn (Nicolas), II: 121, 124, 137, 140 Gémozac, III: 46 Genoa, I: 488. II: 11, 16-24, 36, 147, 163, 164, 170, 171, 194. III : 47, 52–54, 58, 302, 346, 367, 371, 406, 427, 432, 439 Genest (Jean), III: 403 Geneva, 42. See Alex, François de Sales, Guérin (Juste), Sales Geneviève (St.), I: 149. II: 479. III: 457 Geneviève (Sœur), I: 415 Genevois, I : 554 Genlis (Charles Brulard de), I: 520 Gennevilliers, II: 497. III: 403 III: Gentil (Mathurin), I: 580. 258 Gentilly, I: 269. III: 32, 458 Geoffre (Sister Mary de), III: 398 George II, King of England, III: 455 Gérard (Michel), II: 19 Gerberon (Gabriel), III: 116, 174, 178 Gergny, II: 401 Germain (Nicolas), II: 3, 4 Germany, I: 441. II: 57. III: 9, 16 Gerson, I: 203. II: 221 Gesseaume (Henriette), I: 339, 344, 348, 425, 429, 430-432. II: 438-440 Get (Firmin), I: 564, 565, 567, 568, 570, 603-605. II: 147, 155 Giachini (Pietro), III: 427 Gicquel (Jean), II: 94. III: 397 Gien, II: 459 Gif, II: 261 Gilbert (M.), III: 430 Gilbert (Claude), I: 57 Gilles (Jean-Baptiste), I: 489, 491, 558. III: 170 Gillet (Fernand), I: 50 Gillette (Sœur), I: 412 Ginetti (Mars, Cardinal), III: 160 Girard (Louis), I: 75, 93 Girardin (Marie), I: 549 Giraud (Victor), III: 475 Girodon (Antoine), II: 185 Giry (François), III : 451, 452

- Gleizes (Raymond), II: 342, 361
- Glengarry, II: 38
- Glengarry (Earl of), II: 36
- Glogau, ÍI: 49
- Goa, II: 53, 54, 55
- Gobillon (Nicolas), I: 87, 178–181, 388, 389, 392, 398, 406, 407, 468. II: 490. III: 404
- Goblet (Thomas), II: 489
- Godeau (Antoine), I: 250. II: 124, 145, 176, 226, 407. III: 72, 273
- Godeffroy (Charles), I: 254
- Gojon (Abbé), III: 473
- Gomard (Seigneur de la Chassaigne), I: 79
- Gomard (Florence), I: 83
- Gondi (The de Gondi family), I: 60, 61, 62, 63
- Gondi (Albert de), I: 60, 61
- Gondi (Antoine de), I: 60
- Gondi (Catherine de), I: 62
- Gondi (Catherine de Clermont, Dame de), I: 62
- Gondi (Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Dame de), I: 61, 64, 65-66, 68-71, 74, 88-94, 95, 101, 102, 114, 116, 121, 127, 133, 145, 147-150, 191-192, 247, 522. III: 114, 218, 281, 282, 306, 327, 328, 367
- Gondi (Henri de), I: 62, 121
- Gondi (Henri, Cardinal de), I: 60, 61, 115, 116, 121
- Gondi (Jean-François de), Archbishop of Paris, I: 57, 61, 121, 145, 151, 168–169, 173, 188, 238, 257, 258, 350, 360, 470, 471, 484– 485, 513. II: 7, 146. III: 131, 233, 274
- Gondi (Jean-François-Paul de), Cardinal de Retz, I: 61, 62, 121– 122, 127, 361, 472, 473, 492. II: 7-12, 124, 125, 146, 152, 179, 180, 443, 458, 468. III: 181, 192, 387 Gondi (Marie-Catherine de Pierre-
- Vive, Dame de), I: 60 Gondi (Philippe-Emmanuel de), I:
- Condi (1 minpe-Eminantier de), 1 . 57, 58, 61-67, 74, 88, 91, 107, 108, 115, 116-126, 145, 149, 150, 191, 215, 298, 328, 448. III : 28, 31, 37, 39, 89, 90, 114, 354, 387, 400 Gondi (Pierre, Cardinal de), I : 60. III : 332
- Gondi (Pierre de), I: 62, 63
- Gondrée (Nicolas), II: 60, 64, 69, 80, 83
- Gonesse, I: 163. II: 486, 487
- Gontier (Père), II: 211, 212
- Gontière (M.), II: 495
- Gonzague (Anne de), I: 132

- Gonzague (Bénédite de), I: 332 Gonzague (Charles de), Duc de Nevers et de Mantoue, I: 331 Gonzague (Louise-Marie de), Queen of Poland, I: 292, 331-335, 441-448. II : 41-43, 45-48, 477, 480-482. III : 142, 240 Goret (Jean-Pascal), II: 410 Gorlidot (François), II: 291 Gouault (Sebastien), I: 547 Goudron, I: 215 Gouffiers (Mme de), I: 134 Goulas (Nicolas), III: 83, 86 Gournay-sur-Aronde, I: 219, 220 Gournay (Charles-Chretien de), I: 530 Gourrant (M.), I: 533 Goussault (Antoine, Père), I: 293 Goussault (Antoine, fils), I: 293, 294 Goussault (Geneviève Fayet, Dame de), I: 217, 222, 225, 237–241, 279, 292, 293-297, 301, 389, 392, 398, 399, 405. III : 279, 281, 327, 367 Goussault (Guillaume), I: 293, 294 Goussault (Jacques), I: 293, 294 Goussault (Marie-Marthe). See Lotin (Mme) Goussault (Michel), I: 293, 294 Gouy (Catherine), I: 448 Goyau (Georges), III: 373 Grâce (N.-D. de), Buzet, I: 23 Grandmont (College de), II: 244, 246 Gramont (Philibert de), III: 89 Gramont (Renée de), I: 302 Gramont (Marie-Christine de Noailles, Maréchale de), III : 423, 456 Granada (Louis of), I: 184, 226, 323, 399. II: 221. III: 5, 52, 355 Grandchamp (Pierre), I: 40, 41 Grandet (Joseph), I: 522 Grandidier (Alfred), II: 55, 57
- Grandin (Martin), III : 166
- Grandmaison (Geoffrey de), III: 275 Grand-Maisons (M. de), I: 587
- Grasse, II : 145, 176
- Grassins (Collège des), Paris, III : 1
- Grateloup (Jean-Baptiste), III : 381
- Gravelines, II : 392
- Great Britain, III : 282
- Greece, I: 32
- Greffier (Antoine), III: 420
- Gregory VII, Pope, III: 431.
- Gregory XIII, Pope, I: 486. III: 144, 151, 153, 174
- Grenoble, I: 81
- Grenu (Daniel), III: 36
- Gressier (Jeanne), I: 363, 366

Grève (Place de), Paris, II: 464 Grignan (Jacques-Adhemar de Monteil, Abbé de), III: 271 Grigny, I: 301 Grillet (M.), III: 231 Grimal (François), I: 489, 491, 497. III: 395 Grimaldi, Cardinal, I: 540. III: 149, 168 Grodno, II: 42, 43 Grossolles (Hérard de), I: 20 Grou (Jacques), III: 420 Grurex (Pierre), III: 425 Guadaloupe, II : 496 Guébriant (Jean-Baptiste de Budes, Comte de), I: 520 Guébriant (Renée du Bec-Crespin, Comtesse de), I: 333 Gueffier (Etienne), II: 9 Guelton (M.), II: 97, 99 Guemené (Anne de Rohan, Princesse de), III: 146 Guérin (Mlle), I: 222 Guérin (Anne-Marguerite), I: 135. III : 186, 229, 240, 246–249 Guérin (Julien), II: 341-343, 358-359, 361-363, 376-378 Guérin (Juste), II 163, 164, 170, 171, 176. III: 42 Guérin (Mathurine), I: 363, 365, 366, 372, 416-417, 460. III: 392, 393, 420, 422 Guérin (Pierre), I : 310, 311 Guespier (Antoine), II : 138 Car-Guibert (Joseph-Hippolyte, dinal), III: 465 Guichard (Etienne), III: 220, 224 Guidi (Nicolas), I: 497 Guignard (André), II: 153 Guillaume de Paris, I: 276 Guillemin (Claude), II: 367 Guillerval, II: 490 Guillot (Nicolas), I: 549. II: 41, 42, 47 Guingamp, III: 44 Guise, II: 400, 402, 419, 425 Guise (Charles de Lorraine, Duc de), I: 61, 119-120 Guise (Elisabeth d'Orléans, Duchesse de), II: 303 Guise (Marie de Lorraine, Demoiselle de), I: 333 Guyard (Louis), I: 145, 209 Guyenne, II: 212, 416, 458, 459 н

Habert (Isaac), II: 227. III: 145, 147, 151, 152

Hadji Mahommed Luz, II: 344, 346-348 Haignon (M. de), II: 13 Haitze (Joseph de), III: 96 Hallard (Pierre), II: 261 Hallier (François), II: 163. III: 151, 159–161 Ham, II: 238, 423, 431, 441 Hambourg, II: 44 Hamilton (Marie-Paule), III: 213 Hanon (Jean-Baptiste), I: 129. III: 381, 452, 453 Haran (Nicole), I: 364, 432, 439 Hardemont (Anne), I: 434-43 439, 455-456. II: 436, 437 434-435, Hardier (Présidente), III: 247 Hardy (Mlle), II: 259 Harel (Jean), II: 242 Harlay (Achille de), I: 315, 588 Haro (M.), III : 382 Haut (N.-D. de), III : 243 Hautefort (Marie de), III: 90, 208, 209, 212 Haute-Garonne, I: 20 Haute-Pierre (Hôtel de la), Metz, II: 139 Hauteville (François d'), II: 410 Hay, Major, II: 39 Hebrides, The, I: 278. II: 30, 36-38. III: 273, 298, 432 Heiltz-le-Maurupt, III: 42 Heliopolis, III: 122, 289 Hellot (Elisabeth), I: 366, 433 Hélyot (Pierre), I: 229, 300 Hennebont, I: 385, 439, 440 Hennin (Hugues), II: 490 Henri II, King of France, I: 45, 60 Henri III, King of France, I: 252. II: 470 Henrietta-Maria, Queen of England, I: 333, 524. II: 221. $\mathbf{III}:$ 212, 213, 247 Henry IV, King of France, I: 42, 45, 49, 60, 249, 328-329. II: 136, 211, 212, 213, 354, 383. III : 98 Henry (John), II: 19, 23, 410, 500 Herbin de St.-Gabriel (Sœur Elisabeth), II: 390 Herblay, I: 218 Herbron (François), II: 103, 104, 105, 107, 111 Hermant (Godefroy), III: 167, 169, 174, 178 Herse (Charlotte de Ligny, Dame de), I: 288, 323-324, 436, 437, 438. II : 276, 402, 405, 407, 429. III: 32, 171 Herse (Michel Vialart, Seigneur de la forest de), I: 323. II: 335

Hesdin, II: 392 Hibernia. See Ireland Highlands, The, II: 39 Hobier (M.), II : 153 Hocquincourt (Charles de Mouche, Maréchal d'), II: 459, 460 Holland, II: 36, 57, 116 Hollandre (M.), I: 193, 208 Holmoru, III: 42 Hopille (M. d'), II: 153 Horace XVII, II: 198 Houry, II: 413 Houssaye (Michel), I: 54, 250 Huby (Vincent), III: 19 Huguier (Benjamin), II: 343-344 Huntley (The Marquis of), II: 39 Hurault de l'Hospital (Paul), I: 47 Husson (Martin), II: 344-348. III: 332 Hyacinthe (Père, Capuchin), I: 304

Ι

Ialysus, II: 199 Ibrahim (Pasha), II: 355 Ignatius of Loyola (St.), I: 3, 473. III : 166, 315, 316, 329 Ikombo, II : 100 Ile-de-France, II: 409, 442, 443, 491 Iles-d'Or, I: 61, 121 Illiers, II: 131 Incelin (Sister), III 249 Indies, The, II: 56, 59, 60, 77, 85, 94, 103, 107, 108, 112, 223. III: 37, 134, 201, 283 Inghirami (M.), III : 407 Innocent III, Pope, I: 162 Innocent X, Pope, I: 490, 493, 512. II: 8, 10, 14, 30, 466, 496. III : 145, 154, 160, 165, 166, 174, 180, 288 Innocent XII, Pope, I: 276 Innocent XIII, Pope, III: 419 Invalides (Hôtel des), Paris, II: 496. III : 380, 381, 429 Invergarry, II : 40 Ionian Islands, II: 364 Ireland, I: 316, 480, 511, 608. II: 30-36, 38, 40, 497-500. III: 280, 282, 432 Iris, II : 200 Isaac, II: 62 Israel, I: 33. II: 277 Issy, I: 269, 417. III: 455, 456 Italy, I: 39, 259, 260, 269, 287, 347, 492, 501, 569, 608. II : 1-29, 30, 57, 95, 163, 164, 168, 334, 337, 442. III : 19, 47–64, 282, 432 Izally (Jean), III: 403

J

Jacob, I: 46 Jacqueline (Sister), I: 336, 338, 344 Jacquinet (Paul), II: 213 Jal (Auguste), I: 62 Jamain (Martin), I: 525 James III (of England), III: 405 Jansen (Cornelius), III: 90, 114, 115, 138, 144, 148, 151, 153, 154, 156, 162-166, 170, 171, 174 Janson (James), III: 113 Japan, II : 223 Jargeau, II: 459 Jarnac, II : 208 Jean (Catherine), III: 425 Jean-Rose (Hôpital), Meaux, I: 600, 601, 602 Jean de Sainte-Marie (Père), II: 247 Jeandé (Claude), I: 497 [eanne (Sister), I: 337, 340 eanne (Sister), I: 340 eanne (Sister), II: 438 leanne-Baptiste (Sister), I: 438 eanne-Christine (Sister), I: 413 Jeanne-Françoise (Sister), I: 394. II: 491 Jeremiah, I: 265 Jericho, II: 202 Jerome (St.), II: 438. III: 203 Jeronimo (Dom), II: 55 Jersey, II : 30 Jerusalem, II: 202, 367, 368 Joan. See Jeanne Job, I : 466. II : 197 John (St.), I : 275 John the Baptist (St.), I: 266. II: 53, 474. III: 26 John Casimir, King of Poland, I: 333 Joigny, I: 61, 63, 95, 100, 101, 106, 107, 108, 118, 119, 268, 269, 415. III: 31, 39, 40 Jolivet, II: 392 Jolly (Edme), I: 290, 317, 343, 472, 493, 495, 498, 512, 513, 591. II: 13-15, 164-167. III: 101, 288, 290, 401 Joly (Chanoine Claude), III: 123 Joly (Madame), I: 293 Joly (Marie), I: 225-226, 337, 411-413 Jonathas, I: 521. II: 223 Josaphat (Valley of), II: 195 Joseph (St.), I: 199, 416. II: 20, 262. III : 236, 253, 305 Joseph (François Le Clerc du Tremblay, Pere), I: 523 Jovio (Paolo), II: 55

Joyeuse (Louis de Lorraine, Duc de), I: 540 Joysel (François), III: 159, 404 Judas, I: 505 Judea, II: 51 Judith, II: 293 Julian (St.), III: 472 Juliana di Falconieri (St.), III: 426 Julienne (Sister), I: 466 Juvincourt, II: 403

ĸ

Kériolet (Pierre de), III: 4 Kerlivio (Eudo de), III: 19 Kerviller (René), I: 322 Kilnamanagh, II: 35 Knoidart, II: 38 Kosno (Warsaw), II: 49

L

Labadie (Jean), III: 94 La Bastie (Antoine Damas, Seigneur de), I: 73 La Baumède-Suze (Tristan de), III : 402 Labbé (François), II: 489 La Bécherelle (Mme de), III: 32 Labory (Angélique), III: 383 La Bouisse-Rochefort (Jean-Pierre-Jacques-Auguste de), I: 41 La Boulaye (François de Rochefort, Marquis de), II: 451 La Bréole. II : 207 La Brunetière (Guillaume de), III: 402 La Bruyère, I: 415 La Capelle, II: 400 La Chapelle, I: 269, 284, 333, 389-392, 398. II: 127, 131, 261, 394, 474. III: 65, 281 La Chassaigne (Mlle), I: 83,. III: 473 La Chesnaye (Catherine-Angélique Desmé de), III: 236 La Contour (Moussy), II : 138, 139 La Coste (Gaspard de Simiane de), I: 563-564. II: 324, 327, 330, 334-335 Lacour (Claude-Joseph), I: 478. III: 413, 479 La Cour (Didier de), II: 238 Lacourt (M.), 415, 417, 418, 419, 426-427 La Croix (Jeanne de), I: 365-366 Ladre (St.), I: 160 Ladvocat (François), I: 236

La Fayette (François de), III: 86 La Fayette (Louise-Angélique de), III: 186, 199-213, 224 La Fère, I: 365, 452. II: 208. 425, 431, 435, 437 La Ferrière (Chevalier de), II: 347 La Ferté (Emeric-Marc de), I: 579 La Ferté (Henri de Senneterre, Maréchal de), II : 368, 462 La Ferté-Milon, II: 400 La Flèche, III : 273 La Folie, II: 261 Lafonds (Marie-Agnès de), III: 235-236 La Font (Jean), III: 185 Laforêt (Auguste), I: 125 La Fosse (Jacques de), I: 364, 497, 527-529, 567. II: 489. III: 235, 350 Lagault (Jerôme), III: 159, 161 Lage de Paylaurens (Anne-Marie de), III: 134 Lagny, I: 164, 557. II: 476, 487, 488, 490. III : 403 La Gorce (Pierre de), III: 441 Lagrange (François), III: 495 La Guibourgère (Jacques-Raoul de), I: 577. III: 46, 155 Lahargou (Paul), I: 13 La Haye (Jacques de), III: 171, 172 Laisné (Louis), II : 241 La Lane (Noël de, Abbé de Valcroissant), III: 159, 160, 164 Lallemand (Léon), II: 255, 257, 272 Laluque, I: 10 La Marck (Henri-Robert de), I: 570 La Marguerie (Élie Laisné de), II: 241. III: 31, 273 Lambert aux Couteaux, I: 272, 403, 426, 428, 448, 470, 491, 492, 521, 527, 530, 533-536, 539, 543, 573, 574. II : 41-45, 50, 162, 275, 428, 450, 454, 455. III : 34, 37, 90, 97, 27 Lambert de la Motte (Pierre), III : 289 Lambertini (Prosper). See Benedict XIV Lambruschini (Ludovico), III: 439 La Meilleraye (Charles de la Porte, Duc de), I: 422, 586-587. II: 94, 103, 104, 107-113. III : 273 Lamirois (Léonard), II: 490 Lamoignon (Anne-Elizabeth de), III : 184, 233, 234, 244 Lamoignon (Chrétien de), I : 317 Lamoignon (Chrétien-François de), III: 404

- Lamoignon (Guillaume de), I: 317, 319. II : 103, 107, 108, 110, 241, 489. III: 232, 233, 238, 245, 273 (Madeleine Lamoignon Potier, Présidente de), II : 308 Lamoignon (Madeleine de), I: 288, 293, 315, 319–321. II : 303, 480– 482. III: 232 Lamoignon (Marie des Landes, Dame de), I: 14, 279, 292, 293, 317-319, 327, 391. II: 275, 405. III : 240, 247 La Morinière (Michel-Martin de), II: 237 La Mothe-Lambert (Pierre de), I: 316 Lamy (Antoine), I: 304. III: 31 Lamy (Catherine Vigor, Dame), I: 398, 399 Lamy (Vincent), III: 463 Lancelot (Claude), I: 195. II: 124, 125, 404. III: 115, 119, 129, 131, 142, 143, 490 Lancy (Charlotte de), I: 311 Landes, XX, I: 43, 45. III: 471 Landes (Noel des), I: 492 Landrecies, I: 392 La Neuville, II: 367 Laneuville-aux-Bois, II: 392 Laneuville-Roy, I: 219, 221 Langeac, III: 17 Langeac (Agnès de). See Agnes Langlois (Sœur), III: 221 Langlois (Antoine), I: 163 Langlois (Emmanuel), III: 404 Langluse (Gaspard de), III: 403 Langres, I: 22, 60, 144, 252, 255. II: 176, 229. III: 265, 418. See Lamet Languedoc, I: 17. II: 147, 347. III: 15, 100, 271 Lanier (M.), III: 397 Lanneluc (François), III: 470 Lannoi (Comte Charles de), I: 433-434 Lannoy (Marie de), I: 61 Laon, II: 208, 410, 419, 420, 425, 430, 431, 441. III : 403 La Pinsonniere (Abbé de), III: 123, 377 Laplatte (Abbé), I: 109, 112 La Proutière (Marie-Louise Goureau de), III: 216 La Réole, II : 249 Lariboisière (Hôpital), Paris, I: 162 La Rivière (Louis Barbier, Abbè de), I: 229. III: 91 Laroche (Lieutenant), II: 82 La Rochefoucauld (François, Cardinal de), I: 149, 166, 168, 172,
- 525. II: 237, 238, 239, 241, 243. III : 104, 233, 300
- La Rochefoucauld (François, Duc de), II: 468. III: 39, 91, 266
- La Roche-Guyon, I: 149. II: 237
- La Rochelle, I: 119. II: 60, 95, See La 115, 207, 235-236. Guibourgère
- La Roche Saint André, II: 94
- La Rocheposay (Henri-Louis Chasteigner de), III : 124, 126, 128
- La Rose (Pilgrimage to), Sainte-Livrade, I: 326, 501, 532, 593. II: 162. III: 92
- La Ruelle (Marie de), I : 394 La Salle (Claude de), III : 403
- La Salle (Jean de), I: 152, 153. III: 13, 35
- Lascaris (Jean-Paul), III: 38
- Lasnier (Guy), III: 4
- Charles, Comte de), I : Robert-Lasteyrie de Saillant
- Latanne (Jean), I: 50 Lateran (The), Rome, III: 428
- La Tousche-Freslon, I: 585-586 La Tour (Frederic-Maurice de), I: 570-571
- Trémoille (Cardinal Joseph-La
- Emmanuel de), III : 407, 413 Laubardemont (Martin de), III : 129, 133
- Laudin (Denis), I: 594, 595
- Laudin (Gabriel), II: 106
- Launay (Adrien), III: 290
- Lauraine (Marguerite), I : 384
- Laurède, I: 45
- Laurent (Mme), I: 322
- Laval, III: 494 Laval-Boisdauphin (Marie Séguier, Marquise de), I: 293, 588
- Laval-Montigny (François de), III : 287-288
- Lavalle (Marguerite), I: |405
- La Valette (Jean de), I: 20
- La Valette (Louis de Nogaret d'Epernon, Cardinal de), III: 126
- Lavardin (Charles de Beaumanoir de), I: 168
- Lavaur. See Raconis
- La Vaurette, I: 559
- Lavedan (Henri), III: 380
- Laverdet (M.), I: 41
- La Ville-aux-Clercs (Henri-Auguste de Lomenie, Seigneur de), I: 322-323
- La Villette, I: 163, 390. II: 474 Layruels (Père), II: 239
- Lay-Saint-Christophe, II : 367

Lazare (St.), I: 160, 161, 194. III: 11, 14, 374 Lebarg (Joseph), II: 140 Le Bègue (M.) 181 Leberon (Charles de), II: 176, 181 Le Blanc (Charles), II: 110. III: 123 Leblanc (Denis), I: 155. III: 221, 229, 251 Le Bon (Adrien), I: 163-169, 174-175, 516. II: 252. III: 291, 320, 339 Lebon (Madeleine), II: 261 Le Boucher (Vicar General), III: 39 Le Bourg (Roger), II: 57 Le Bouthillier (Victor), I: 539 Le Bret (Mlle), III: 231, 235 Le Bret (Jacques), II: 2 Lebreton (Louis), I: 480-484. II: 1-3 Le Brun (Sister), III: 221 Le Brun (Dominique), I: 300 Le Camus (Antoinette). See Marillac (Antoinette de) Lecanu (Auguste-François), I: 55, 57, 59 Le Catelet, II : 400 Lechassier (François), III: 404 Le Clerc (M.), III : 229 Leclerc (Pierre), II: 30 Le Clerc de la Forêt (Antoine), I: 46 Le Comte (Vicar General of Paris), III: 250 Le Coust (Gregoire), I: 57 Le Fort (François), III: 123 Lefort (Samson), II: 261 Le Gauffre (Thomas), III: 273 Legay (Pierre), II: 246 Legendre (Renault), II : 11 Leghorn, II: 347, 355 Le Goutteux (Elizabeth). See Turgis (Elizabeth) Le Grand (Alexandre-Philippe), III: 420, 422 Le Gras (Antoine), I: 182, 183, 189, 193 Le Gras (St. Louise de Marillac, Demoiselle), I: 177-231, 233, 274, 283, 284, 292, 293, 295-301, 318, 320, 334, 336-346, 348, 350, 351, 355, 359-367, 369-374, 378, 379, 381, 382, 386, 387, 388-401, 402-407, 410-428, 431-433, 435-438, 441-442, 445-447, 449-451, 453-459. 463-468, 563. II : 259, 261, 262, 264, 266, 268, 271, 273-278, 285, 286, 288, 293, 302, 319, 323, 436, 439, 452, 490, 494-496. III: 66, 281, 324, 346, 347, 365, 367, 374, 391, 392

Le Gras (Michel-Antoine), I: 182. 190, 464 Le Gras (Renée-Louise), I: 464 Legros (M.), III: 143 Le Gros (Jean-Baptiste), I: 491. II: 464-465 Lehault (Nicolas), II: 414, 419, 420 Le Havre, III : 260 Le Jay (Nicolas), I: 172. III: 116 Le Jeune (Jean), I: 250 Lejuge (Jerôme), II : 20, 23 Le Laboureur (Jean), I: 333 Le Laboureur (Marie-Madeleine), I: 127. III: 255 Le Lascheur (Nicolas), I: 539 Lemaistre (Antoine), II: 404, 406, 407 Lemaître (Henri), I: 229 Lemaître (Jacques), III: 425 Le Maître (Nicolas), III: 173 Le Mans, I: 168, 248, 420-421, 488, 507, 579-582. II: 110, 162, 174, 208, 229, 233, 448, 449-451, 475. III: 186, 198, 216, 378 Le Masle (Michel), I: 398 Le Masson (Innocent), I: 556 Le Masson (Marie-Angélique), III: 216 Lemeret (Jeanne), I: 445 Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, I: 215 Le Meunier (François), I: 602 Le Monnier (Leon), III: 379, 384 Lemperière (Dom), II: 239 Lenfantin (Radegonde), I: 452-453 Lens, II: 443 Lenti (Marcello, Cardinal), II: 2, 4 Léon, II : 241 Leo XIII, Pope, III: 465, 467 Leopold (Governor of the Low Countries), II: 398, 468 Lepeintre (Jeanne), I: 337-338, 390, 420, 426-429, 450. II: 302 Le Pelletier (Presidente), I: 307 Le Pelletier (Claude), III : 000 Lepelletier (François), I: 164 Le Pelletier de St.-Fargeau (Louis-Michel, Comte de), I: 41 Le Pilleur (Mlle), I: 307 Lepiné (Michel), III: 420 Le Porteur (Simon), II: 417 Le Prévost (Jean-Louis), II: 468. III: 448 Le Puy. See Puy Lérins, II: 240 Le Roule, I: 55 Le Roux (Mme), I: 293, 399 Leroy (M.), II: 273, 274 Leroy (Lieutenant), II: 82 Le Roy (Marie-Agnès), III: 189, 190, 229, 237, 238, 240-243

Lille, I: 42

Le Sage (Catherine-Agnès), III: 216 Lesage (Jacques), II: 351 Lescar, I: 606-607. III: 158. 403 Lescellier (Jacques), I 164 Leschassier (François), III: 265 Lescot (Jacques), II: 227. III: 123, 129-131, 133, 134, 137-140 Lesdiguières (Charles, Sire de Crequi, Duc de), I: 61, 72. III: 210 Lesceq (Nicholas), I: 324. II: 125 Le Soin (Marguerite), I: 418 Le Soudier (Jacques), II: 410 Le Soudier (Jacques), II: 410 Lespagnandelle (Mathieu), I: 539 L'Espicier (Anne), III : 220 Lestang (Marie Delpech de), I : 270. II: 495-497. III: 80, 272 Lestocq (Nicholas de), I: 164, 165, 167, 464, 465, 467 L'Estoile (Pierre de), II : 211, 212 Le Tanneur (Claude-Marie), III: 244 Le Tonnelier (Etienne), I: 184 Le Vacher (Jean), II: 342-350, 359, 361, 363, 365 Le Vacher (Philippe), II: 30, 350-353, 356, 363, 365 Levant, I: 28, 61, 118, 569. II: 395 Levasseur (David), II: 379 Le Vavasseur (Vicomtesse), I: 290 Le Vazeux (Achille), I: 488, 556. II: 6 Lheureux (Joseph), II: 261 Lhuillier (Dominique), I: 497, 557-558 Lhuillier (Françoise), I: 307 Lhuillier (Hélène-Angélique), I: 135, 136, 307, 308. III: 172, 184, 194, 195, 197, 198, 202, 207-213, 220, 221, 230 Lhuillier (Marie). See Villeneuve (Mme de), III: 420, 422 Lhuitre, I: 274, 275 Liancourt, I: 365, 415-417, 422 Liancourt (Jeanne de Schomberg), I: 306, 398, 417. III: 90, 163, 176-178 Liancourt (Roger, Duc de), II: 408. III: 163, 176-178, 257, 258, 273, 278 Libanus, I: 528 Libeauchamp (Jacques), III: 166 Liége, III: 449 Lier, I : 10 Ligin (Mme de), I: 284, 293 Ligny (Charotte de). See Herse (Mme de) Ligny (Dominique de), I: 602

Limeil, II: 457. III: 96 Limerick, II: 32-35 Limoges, I: 252. III: 476 Limouron (A hamlet near Villamblain), I: 169 Limousin, I: 456 Linas, II: 475 Lionne (Artus de), III: 410 Lionne (Catherine-Agnès de), III 232, 239 Lionne (Elisabeth-Melanie de), III : 244 Lionne (Hugues de), II: 10-12. III: 86, 189, 232 Lionne (Marie-Marguerite de), III: 230, 232, 241 Lisbon, I: 119. II: 110 Lisieux, II: 496. See Gospeau Lisieux (Collège de), Paris, I: 559 Lithuania, II: 42, 45, 47 Liverdi (Balthazar Grangier de), I: 592, 593. II : 227 Lobineau (Gui-Alexis), II : 257 Lobligeois (M.), II: 287 Lochon (René), III: 378-380, 384 Lodève, II : 227, 245, 246 Loisel (Pierre), III: 306 Loiseleur (Jules), III: 82 Loisy, I: 215 Lombez. See Daffis Lomenie (Henri-Auguste de). See Brienne (Comte de). See Brienne London, III: 384 Longchamp, I: 524. II: 252 Longpont, III: 455, 456 Longueville (Henri II, Duc de), I: 329 Longueville (Anne-Geneviève de Bourbon, Duchesse de), I: 328-329. III: 22 Longueville (Louise de Bourbon, Duchesse de), III: 126 Loos, I: 42 Loret (Jean), I: 2. III: 401 Loret (Julienne), I: 363-364, 366, 397, 413, 437, 463 Loretto (Our Lady of), II: 2, 12. III: 161, 226 Lorges (Hôtel de), Paris, III: 434 Lorraine, I: 229, 302, 326, 400, 456-457, II: 127, 131, 238, 239, 366-397, 495. III: 71, 80, 299, 404, 490 Lorraine (Charles, Duc de), II: 387. II: 415, 428, 461, 468, 472. III: 406, 425 Lorraine (François de), II: 384 Lorthon (Pierre de), I: 556-559 Loth (Arthur), I: 3. III: 475

Lotin (Nicolas), I: 294 Lotin (Marie-Marthe Goussault. Dame), I: 293, 294, 399 Louans, I: 539 Loudun, I: 533, 537, 539. $\mathbf{III}:$ 198 Louis VI, King of France, I: 160 Louis VII, King of France, I: 160 Louis IX, King of France, I: 217, 228. II: 357. III: 218 Louis XI, King of France, II: 282 Louis XIII, King of France, I: 113, 557, 571-573, 582. II: 132, 133-135, 146, 176, 213, 226, 237-239, 244, 271, 316, 340, 367, 370. III: 36, 70-79, 84, 85, 141, 199-205, 207-211, 220, 224, 235, 273, 438, 460 Louis XIV, King of France, I: 113, 315, 320, 326, 333, 478, 540, 542. II: 7, 468, 470. III: 84, 100-102, 189, 209, 212, 405, 407, 430 Louis XVIII, King of France, II: 282 Louis (a converted Turk), I: 122 Loujat (Mme), I: 293 Louvain, I: 187. III: 113, 114, 144 Louvre (Le), Paris, I: 322. II: 7, 212, 472. III : 83, 107, 209, 211, 383 Lowicz, I: 441 Lucas (Antoine), I: 492. III: 33 Lucas (Martin), I: 579 Luce (Jeanne), II: 322 Luçon, I: 252, 255, 501, 533, 543-545. II : 449, 454. III : 45, 46, 102, 120, 155, 392. See Nivelle Lucretius, II: 198 Lude (Marguerite-Louise đe Bethune, Duchesse de), I: 293 Ludes, III : 41 Ludovisio (Nicolo, Cardinal), III: Lullen (Marie), I: 433-435 Lumague (Marie). See Pollalion (Mlle) Lumsden (Thomas), II: 36, 38-39 Lunéville, II : 391, 392 Luppé de Guaranne (Jean-Baptiste), I: 121 Luserna, III : 60 Luther, II: 377. III: 113, 157, 166, 171 Luxembourg, II: 414 Luxembourg (Louise de), I: 322 Luynes (Louis-Charles Albert, Duc de), I: 325, 436, 437. II: 408, 478

Luzarches, II: 487

Luzoir, II: 401

Lye (Thaddeus), II: 30, 32, 35

Lyons, I: 60, 72, 83, 86, 87, 88, 140, 229, 252, 256, 301, 539. II: 179, 310. III: 238, 263, 273, 403, 429, 450, 453, 454, 455, 460, 473, 474 Lyons (Gulf of), I: 28

М

Macé (Etienne), III: 458 Mâchefer (Captain), II: 415 Machicore (Andrian), II : 73, 90, 91 Machon (Louis), III : 18 Mackey (Dom B.), I: 86 Mácon, Ì: 80, 109–113, 252, 255. II: 280. III: 488 Madagascar, I: 278, 404, 440, 461, 480, 511, 608. II : 51-117, 222, 301. III: 282, 298, 302, 304. 334, 418 Madamboro (Andrian), II: 72 Madeleine (Sister), I: 336, 338 Madeleine (Couvent de la), Paris, I: 271. III: 80 Madrid, III : 114, 383 Maffre (Justin), I: 20 Magny, III: 130 Maguelone (Collège de), Paris, I: 17 Mahamet (Pacha), II: 354 Maheut (Nicolas), I: 163, 174 Mahomet, I: 31, 36. II: 62, 340, 346, 360. III: 300 Maignelay (Marguerite de Gondi, Marquise de), I: 306, 413, 414, 415. II: 150. III: 90, 191-192, 220, 221, 224, 225, 231, 318 Maignen (M.), III: 448 Maillard (Antoine), II: 84. III: 396 Maillard (Françoise-Catherine), III : 239, 253, 254 Maillard (Olivier), II: 204 Mailly, I: 274, 275 Mailly (Famille de), I: 607 Mailly (Jules), III: 398 Maillezais, II : 235–236 Maine, II: 400 Maintenon (Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de), II : 303 Maiour (La), I : 605-606 Maison-Dieu (La), I: 579 Majorca, I: 360 Malay (Archipelago), II: 61 Maldachini (Cardinal), II: 14 Malier (François), I : 549, 576 Malotet (Arthur), II : 51, 76

- Malzeville, II: 367
- Manafiafy, II: 56 Manamboule, II: 99
- Mananghe (Andrian), II: 90
- Mancini (Cardinal), II: 165
- Mancini (Jeronime Masarin, Dame), III: 245
- Mandosse (Hôtel de), Paris, II: 486
- Mandrare, II: 90
- Manessier (Nicolas), III: 160
- Mangonville, II: 367
- Mans, III: 455, 487
- Mansart (François), III: 195, 236
- Manseaux (Françoise), II: 438
- Mantes, II: 131
- Mantua (Charles de Gonzague, Duc de), I : 330, 331
- Marainviller, II: 392
- Marans, I: 30
- Marathon, II: 199
- Marbeuf (Claude de), I: 588, 590
- Mark (St.), II: 79
- Marcangelis (Marc-Ange de), III: 425
- Marca (Pierre de), II: 8
- Marcel (Claude), I: 307
- Marchais-en-Brie, I: 103, 104. III: 459
- Marchetty (François), II: 325-329. III: 96
- Marcheville (Comte de), III: 116
- Marciac, II: 249
- Marcillac (M. de), II: 241
- Maréchal (Catherine), I: 302
- Marescotti (Count), II: 165
- Mareuil-en-Dôle, II: 417
- Margerie (Amedée de), I: 86
- Marguerite (Sister) of Saint-Paul, I: 336, 338, 344
- Marguerite (Sister) of Fontainebleau, I: 432
- Marguerite (Sister) of Nanteuil, I: **4**14
- Marguerite de Valois, wife of Henry IV, I: 45-50
- Mariano (Luiz), II : 52, 54, 55
- Marie (Sister) of Chars, I: 437
- Marie (Sister), sent to Calais, II: 438
- Marie (Sister), of Nantes, I: 425
- Marie (Sister), of Valence, III: 261
- Marie-Denyse (Sister), I: 339, 381
- Marie-Joseph (Sister), I: 490 Marie de Médicis, Mother of Louis
- XIII, I : 49, 182, 238, 326, 329, 523, 524. II: 281. III: 216, 219, 225, 235
- Marie du Saint-Sacrement. See Marillac (Valentine de)
- Marigny, II: 490

- Marillac (Antoinette Le Camus, Dame de). See Le Camus (Antoinette)
- Marillac (Bertrand de), I: 177
- Marillac (Charles de), I: 177
- Marillac (Innocente de). See Vendy (Innocente de)
- Marillac (Louis de), I: 177, 179, 181
- Marillac (Louis de, Marshal), I: 177 Marillac (Louis de). See Le Gras (Louise)
- Marillac (Louise de, Dominicaness), I: 179
- Marillac (Marthe de la Rosière, Dame de), I: 178
- Marillac (Michel de), I: 177, 182, 184-186, 188. II : 103, 241
- Marillac (Octavien de), I: 182
- Marillac (René de), I: 182
- Marillac (Valence de). See Attichy (Valence d')
- Marillac (Valentine de), I: 182
- Marle, II : 401, 413, 419, 425, 441
- Marly-le-Roi, I: 163
- Marmoutier, II: 237, 238, 240, 242 Maropia, II: 82
- Marquemont (Denis de), I: 73, 80, 85, 87, 88, 140
- Mars (Dom Noël), I: 591
- Marquette (Geneviève-Catherine), IIĪ: 420
- Marsal, II : 389, 391
- Marseilles, I: 28, 91, 115-119, 121, 122, 125, 127-130, 149, 265, 289, 326, 529, 562-564, 566-570, 604. II: 147, 174, 175, 315, 318, 323-327, 330-336, 337, 347, 355, 363,
- 364, 449. III : 96, 260, 346, 489 Marsie, II: 199
- Marsillac, III: 39
- Marsillac (Sylvestre de Crusy de), III: <u>3</u>3
- Marte (J. de), II: 254
- Martène (Edmond), II: 242
- Martha of Jesus (Sister), III: 393
- Martignac (Jean-Baptiste-Silvere Gay, Vicomte de), III: 436
- Martin (St.) of Tours, I: 132, 134. II: 240
- Martin (Eugène), I: 530
- Martin (Isabelle or Elizabeth), I: 339, 407, 422-424
- Martin (Jean), II: 3, 16–17, 19, 24, 26-29, 147. III : 47, 55, 56, 58-63, 371
- Martin (Pierre), II: 261
- Martin (Lange de), II: 341, 343
- Martine (Jacques), III: 123
- Martinique, II: 496
- Martinis (Jerôme de), II: 15

Martinozzi (Anna-Maria). I: 320. II: 303. III: 245 Mary, Mother of God. I: 9, 11, 56. 85, 196, 197, 199, 200, 241, 341, 477. II: 122, 135, 209. III: 17, 24, 211, 269, 304-305, 353, 356 Mary Magdalen (St.), II: 210. III: 219, 221, 226 Masson (Jean), III: 404 Masson (Louise), I: 317 Matatane, II: 75 Mathieu (Brother). See Regnard (Mathieu) Mathieu (Chanoine Joseph-Marie). III: 439 Matrilonneau (Marie), I: 407 Mattei, II: 14 Matthew (St.), III: 221 (Monastery of), at Maubuisson Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône, I: 136 Maule, I: 419 Maupas du Tour (Henri de), I: 132. II: 124, 145. III: 399, 401 Maupeou (Jean de), I: 520. II: 124, 146 Maupeou (Marguerite de Creil, Présidente de), I : 293 Maupeou (Marie-Elisabeth de), III : 186, 214, 215 Maure (Anne d'Attichy, Comtesse de), I`: 187 Mauriac, I: 177 Mauriol (Raymond), I: 9, 10, 11. III: 408, 490 Mauron, III : 43 Mauroy (Seraphin de), II : 301 Maury (Jean-Sifrein, Cardinal), I: 128, 129. II: 231, 263. III: 380 Maynard (François de), I: 46 Maynard (Ulysse), I: 59, 129. II: 137, 141, 229, 231, 263, 485. III : 131, 379, 475, 476, 480, 490, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496 Mayot, II : 401 Mayran (Benjamin), I: 551 Maytie (Arnaud-François de), I: 520 Mazarin (Jules, Cardinal), I: 47, 62, 272, 333, 380, 472, 492, 540, 541. II: 7-12, 211, 228, 229, 231, 241, 300, 398, 400, 414, 416, 417, 443, 444, 448, 453, 457-461, 469, 471-472. III: 82-84, 86-93, 104, 109, 148, 149, 164, 173, 232, 245, 266, 274, 283, 284, 293 Mazarin (Hortense Mancini, Duchesse de), III: 212 Meaux, I: 127, 207, 256, 556, 557, 600-601, 603. II: 146, 153, 162,

170, 496. III: 196, 213, 214, 215, 402, 403. See Séguier, Dominique Mechtilde du Saint-Sacrement (Catherine de Bar, Sœur), II: 390 Médicis (Ferdinand de), I: 21 Médicis (Marie de). See Marie de Médicis Mehoncourt, II: 392 Melchisedech, II: 260 Méliand (Blaise), I: 229, 239, 324, 359, 360 Méliand (Victor-Auguste), III: 402 Melliardier (Marguerite-Françoise), III: 254 Melun, I: 552. II: 146. III: 186 Ménage (Françoise), I: 439 Ménage (Madeleine), I: 365. II: 302 Ménage (Marguerite), II: 438 Ménages (Hospice des), Paris, II: 493 Ménard (Père, Oratorian), I: 191 Mende, III : 33, 34, 102 Menot (Jean), II : 204 Menou (Jacques-François, Baron de), III: 452 Mercœur (Laure Mancini, Duchesse de), III: 245 Mercœur (Marie de Luxembourg, Duchesse de), I: 181 Méru. II : 262 Mescatin-la-Faye (Thomas de), I: 85 Mesgrigny (Louis de), I: 171 Mesnil-Aubry, I: 147 Messier (Louis), I: 257 Metellopolis, III: 289 Métezeau (Paul), I: 54, 74 Metz, I: 60, 252, 265, 285, 456, 522, 526, 607. II: 136-139, 141–144, 147, 232, 371, 382, 384, 387, 388. III : 198, 403 Meung-sur-Loire, I: 424 Meyster (Etienne), I: 522. II: 132 Mézières, II : 431 Michaëlis (Jean), II: 239, 246 Michaud (Joseph), I: 330, 331. III: 85 Michel (Louise), I: 439 Michelet (Jules), II: 398 Michelle (Šœur), I: 336 Midée, II : 199 Midot (Jean), II: 373 Migne (Jacques-Paul), II: 124, 198, 200, 205-207, 209-210 Milan, I: 260 Minerva, II: 198, 199 Miramion (Jean-Jacques de Beauharnais, Seigneur de), I: 314

Miramion (Marie Bonneau, Dame de), I: 288, 292, 307, 314-317, 327, 399. II: 303, 304. III: 289, 299, 490 Miramion (Marie de), I: 314 Mirecourt, II: 367, 389, 391 Mirepoix, I: 17 Mirepoix (Catherine Caulet, Baronne de), I : 293, 398, 400 Mistrol (Ferrand de), III: 448 Moidart, II: 38 Molé (Edouard). See Athanase (Père) Molé (Edouard), II : 229, 230, 231, 233. III: 111, 217, 219 Molé (Mathieu), I: 208. II: 320, 443, 446, 447. III : 111 Molesme, II: 240 Molina (Carthusian), II: 158, 221 Monceaux, I: 55, 57 Monchy (Nicholas), III: 122 Moncontour, I: 365 Mondeville, II: 478 Mondovi, III: 451 Mongel (Madeleine), I: 407 Monica (St.), I: 407 Mons, III: 241, 242 Montagny, I: 602 Montaigut, II: 414 Montargis, III: 429 Montauban, I: 595-597. II: 174, 208. III : 33, 46, 94, 95, 400, 403, 456. See Murviel Montault (Vicar General), III: 458 Montauriol, I: 597 Montbard, III: 286 Montbezat, I: 579 Montbron, I: 323 Montceau-les-Loups, II: 401 Montchal (Charles de), II: 176 Montcornet, II: 402 Mont-Dieu, II: 161 Montdidier, I: 226. II: 131 Montech, I: 595-596 Montecitorio (Rome), II: 15. III: 426, 428, 451 Montefiascone, I: 129 Montenas (Jean de), II: 243 Montevit (Germain de), II: 379 Montferrand, I: 182 Montfort-Lamaury, II: 261, 389 Montgaillard (Landes), I: 8 Montgaillard (Pierre-Jean-François Persin de), I: 8 Montgomery (Comtesse de), II: 387 Montgomery (Gabriel de), I: 9 Montgomery (Hôtel de), Metz, II: 144 Montholon (Comte de), II: 404 VOL. III.-2 N

Montholon (Jean de), II: 310. III: 218 Monthoux (M. de), II: 44 Montignac, III: 39 Montigny (Mme de), III: 231 Montlhéry, III : 455 Montmajour, II : 242 Montmartre, II: 255, 390 Montmédy, I: 460. II: 437 Montmélian, II : 208 Montmirail, I: 61, 62, 63, 95, 101-102, 113, 133, 211, 215, 268, 438, 496, 576. II: 307, 410, 430. III : 31, 332, 425, 456 Montmorand (Baron de), III : 298 Montmorency (Charlotte-Marguerite de). See Condé (Madame de) Montmorency (François-Henri de), III: 81 Montmorency (Henri de), I: 328 Montmorillon, III: 490 Montmorin (Armand de), III: 399 Mont-Notre-Dame, II: 401 Montolieu (Guillaume de), I: 119 Montorio (Pietro), I: 33, 34, 42 Montpellier, I: 81, 603-605. II: 175, 227. III: 130, 382, 429. See Bosquet, Colbert (Jacques-Joachim) Montpensier (Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Duchesse de), I: 333, 354, 452. II; 463, 472. III: 255 Montreuil-sous-Bois, I: 214, 269 Montreuil-sur-Mer, I: 433-436. II: 493 Montreux, II: 401 Montrouge (Jacques de), II: 229 Montry (M. de), III: 217-220 Montserrat, I: 493 Mont-Valérien, II: 487 Monza (John Chryostosm), II: 18, 21 Monzon, I: 523 Morangis (Antoine de Barillon de), III: 392 Morangis (Philiberte d'Amoncourt, Dame de), I: 240 Morar, II: 38 Moray, II: 38 Moreau (Marguerite), I: 441-442, 446, 447 Morel (Dom), I: 584, 586-587, 59I Morennes (Claude de), I: 164 Morlaix, III: 44 Morocco, II: 337, 365 Morone (Palazzo), Rome, II: 3 Mortagne-sur-Gironde, III: 34

Mortier (Père), II : 247-249

Moses, I: 104, 357, 358. II: 62, oses, 1: 104, 307, 25 106, 620. III: 124, 364 (Francoise Bertaud Motteville de), I: 330. III: 83, 87, 205, 213, 490 Mouchy-le-Gache, II: 413 Moulins, I: 141 Mourath (Pacha) (cf. Murath) Mourret (Fernand), III: 480 Mousnier (Jean-François), I: 461. II: 84, 85, 92–94, 103, 410 Moutiers-Saint-Jean, I: 525, 526. II: 124, 137. III: 39, 379, 404. See Chandenier (Claude de) Mouzon, I: 460, 571. II: 400 Moyen-Vic, II: 391 Mugnier (Jean-Jacques), I: 600. II: 410 Munich, III: 383 Munster, II: 389. III: 79, 91 Murath (Pasha), II: 354 Muret, I: 269 Murviel (Anne de), I: 595. III: 33 Muset (Claude), II: 439 Mussart (Père), II: 239 Mussot (Mme), I: 293 Myionnet (Clement), III: 448

Ν

Nacquart (Charles), I: 404. II: 58-60, 64-81, 83-86. III: 490 Nadal (Chanoine), II: 181 Nancy, II: 367, 368, 371, 382, 384, 388, 389, 393. III: 403, 488 Nangis (Marie-Henriette d'Aloigny de Rochefort, Marquise de), I: 307 Nantes, I: 60, 81, 119, 338, 350, 361, 385, 422-431, 439, 587. II: 8, 31, 59, 104, 110, 112, 114, 115, 449, 454, 493 Nanteuil-le-Haudouin, I: 413, 415 Nantua, II: 389 Naples, II: 168. III: 383 Napoleon, Emperor, III: 452 Narbonne, I: 27, 28, 385, 458, 459, 598, 605. II: 174, 193, 229, See Fouquet III: 102, 400. (François) Naseau (Marguerite), I: 223-225. Nasseau (Elizabeth de), I: 571 Navarre, I: 606. III: 102 Navarre (Collège de), Paris, I: 518. II: 124, 153, 183, 184. III: 1, 152, 330 Nay (Theodore de), III: 459 Nazareth, II: 201

Negri (Pellegrino di), III: 411 Nelz (Jean de), II: 489 Nemours (Henry of Savoy, Duke of), I: 330. II: 459, 468 Nemours (Marie d'Orléans, Duchesse de), I: 330, 331. III: 212, 232, 244, 246, 249 Nesmond (Anne de Lamoignon, Dame de), I: 288, 293, 298, 307 Nesmond (François de), II: 146. III: 402 Netherlands (The), I: 329. II: 44. III: 145 Neufchâteau, II : 389, 390 Neufchatel-en-Bray, I: 269 Neufchatel-en-Brie, I: 163 Neufville (Ferdinand de), I: 588 Neuilly, II: 447 Neuville-le-Roy, I: 210 Nevers (Hôtel de), Paris, I: 332, 333 Nevers (Charles de Gonzague, Duc de), I: 331 New Orleans, III: 457 Nicholas (St.), I: 47 Nicholas IV, Pope, I: 162 Nicola (surgeon), II: 10 Nicolay (Mlle), III: 232 Nicolay (Diane de Mailly de le Tour-Landry, Dame de), I: 279, 292 Nicole (Sister), I: 336 Nîmes, II : 207 Niolo (Le) III: 54, 56-58 Nivelle (Pierre), I: 544. III: 158 Noailles (Adrien-Maurice, Duc de), III: 423, 456 Noailles (Amblard, Vicomte de), I: 328, 333 Noailles (Charles de), I: 246 Noailles (Louis-Antoine de), III: 276, 278, 402, 405, 407, 410, 411, 413, 419 Noah, II: 295 Noirmoutiers (M. de), II: 414 Nogent-sur-Ceine, III: 43 Nolet (Françoise-Paule), I: 418 Nom-de-Jésus (Hospice du), I : 338, 380, 401, 448, 519. II: 284-287, 290-292. III : 343, 398 Nomeny, II: 387, 388, 389 Norais (M.), I: 516 Norais (Mlle), I: 516 Noret (Marguerite), I: 423 Norma, II : 4 Normandy, I: 263, 451. II: 400, 458 Notre-Dame, Paris, II: 189, 255, 443, 479. III: 72, 118, 269 Notre-Dame (Ile), Paris, I: 304

Nouelly (Boniface), II: 350, 351,

- 354 Nouet (Jacques), III: 147
- Noyers (Sublet de), III : 90, 200
- Noyon, I: 607. II: 123, 147, 162,
 - 163, 410, 431
- Nully, II: 476

0

- O (Louise-Marie Seguier, Marquise d'), I: 436 Odiot (the goldsmith), III: 434, 446, 447 Odo (St.), I: 160 O'Dwyer, Edmund, II: 35 Olier (Jean-Jacques), I: 174, 244, 263, 266, 304, 323, 522. II : 124, 128-133, 146, 147, 151, 155, 170, 175, 176, 178–179, 219. III : 4, 16, 17, 34, 91, 98–100, 102, 177, 178, 262–270, 273, 283, 326, 490 Oliva, II: 50 Olivaint (Pierre), III: 448 Oloron, II: 227, 231, 236 Oppeln, II: 48, 49 Orange, I: 333 Orgeville (Louis d'), I: 585-587 Orkney (Islands), II: 30, 38. III: 273 Orléans, I: 256, 424. II: 459. III : 2, 158, 228, 243, 273, 456 Orléans (Gaston, Duc d'), II: 459-462, 464, 465, 469, 472 Orléans (Marguerite de Lorraine, Duchesse d'), III: 269 Orléans (Marguerite-Louise d'), III : 2, 255 Orléans (Philippe, Duc de), I: 478. II: 303. III: 76, 78, 93 Orléans (Le Père Pierre-Joseph d'), I: 319 Orme (N.-D. de l'), I: 595, 596, 598 Ormesson (Olivier Lefèvre de), II : 103, 229, 239, 241. III : 86, 91 Ornano (Henri-François-Alphonse d'), II : 212, 465 Orsigny (a farm at Saclay), I: 516, 517. II: 449, 450. III: 366, 390 Orthez, I: 1 Osma (Pierre d'), III : 121 Ossat (Arnaud, Cardinal d'), I: 42. Ossolinski (Palace), Warsaw, II: 49 Ostend, II: 110 Ostia, II: 2 Otto Boni (Cardinal), III: 413 Oudard (Charles), II: 415
- Ovid, III: 84 Ozanam (Antoine-Frederic), II: 149. III: 448
- Ozenne (Charles), I: 445, 549, 550, 600. II: 8, 44-49

\mathbf{P}

Pabba (The Island of), II: 38

- Pacca (Cardinal), I: 129. III: 453
- Paderborn, II: 389
- Padua, III: 487
- Paillart, I: 96, 105
- Paillole (Maison), Pouy, I: 6
- Paimblant de Rouil (M.), III : 495, 496
- 490 Paix (N.-D. de). See Fieulaine Palais-Royal, III: 82, 87 Palaiseau, II: 460, 476, 487, 488, 489. III: 403
- Palaiseau (Marquise de), I: 293
- Palatinate (The), II : 402
- Palestrina, III : 50
- Pallu (François), II: 124. III: 115, 122, 287-289
- Palma, II: 361
- Pamiers, II: 146, 153, 176, 227. III: 103, 123, 155, 400
- Pampeluna, I : 17
- Pamphili (Cardinal Astalli), III: 160

Panfou, I: 311

- Pangoy (Jeanne), I: 416
- Pantin, III : 476 ine, Parey-Saint-Césaire, II : 367
 - Paris, I: xxiii, 38, 39, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 50, 54, 55, 57, 58, 61, 62, 98, 115, 116, 117, 118, 121, 122, 126, 127, 132, 134, 135, 136-142, 144, 146, 149, 151, 157, 158, 159, 161, 162, 173, 187, 190, 191, 207, 208, 214, 255, 264, 276, 294, 299, 300, 301, 308, 310, 328, 331, 336, 343, 350, 365, 371, 380, 385, 387, 391, 400, 401, 411; 412, 413, 415, 417, 421, 431, 435, 436, 439, 440, 446, 451, 452, 456, 470, 473, 476, 481, 486, 487, 488, 500, 501, 503, 507, 511-514, 525, 541, 553, 583, 590. II: 1, 5, 7, 12, 36, 44, 58, 83, 84, 102, 114, 116, 118, 124, 127, 130-133, 137, 139, 142, 147-148, 155, 161, 176, 180, 208, 212-214, 247-250, 256-257, 261, 263, 275, 277, 278, 280, 283, 291, 296, 298-301. III: 2, 3, 4, 9, 15, 17, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 65, 86, 92, 93, 98, 99, 110, 112, 114, 116, 118, 129, 130, 131, 150, 159, 163, 168,

171, 182, 185, 186, 189-191, 194-216, 217, 223, 230, 235, 237, 239, 240, 242, 245-250, 253, 259, 261, 265, 274, 277, 278, 289, 302, 304, 305, 312, 313, 317, 318, 340, 354, 371, 379, 380, 382, 386, 391, 398, 399, 403, 406, 407, 410, 411, 414, 416, 417, 419, 425, 430, 434-436, 438, 440, 441, 444, 446, 450, 451, 455, 456, 460, 463, 466, 468, 472, 476, 487, 488, 490 Parisy (Antoine), I: 603, 605 Parrang (Jean), I: 160 Parre (Jean), II: 410, 431-435 Parsin (Marie), II: 261 Pascal (Blaise), I: 292. III: 167, 168, 180 Pascal (Jacqueline), I: 292 Patriarche (Salomon), II: 30 Patrue (Thomase), II: 261 Patte (Philippe), II: 111, 112, 114-116 Paul (St.), I: 34, 69, 76, 103. II: 59, 197. III: 136, 149, 156, 305, 366, 373 Paul IV, Pope, I: 488 Paul (Chevalier), II: 364 Paul (House), at Pouy, I: 4 Paul (Stream), at Pouy, I: 5 Paul (de) (the family), III: 476 Paul (Bernard de), I: 6 Paul (Bertrande de Moras, wife of), I: 6 Paul (Étienne de), I: 12 Paul (François de), III: 319 Paul (Guyon de), I: 6 Paul (Jean de), I: 6, 12 Paul (Marie de), I: 6 Paul (Marie-Claudine de), I: 6 Paule (Françoise), I: 366 Paulin (Charles), I: 540, 541 Paulin (Jean), II: 204 Paultre (Christian), II: 283, 304 Paulucci (Antonio), III: 420 Pavillon (Nicolas), I: 217, 520, 550-551. II: 124, 133-135, 145, 147, 155, 172, 176, 192, 219, 226. III: 4, 155–158, 174, 175, 277, 278, 490 Payan d'Augery (Abbé), I: 117 Pébrac, I: 265. II: 131, 132. III: 5, 35, 266 Pelletier (Mme), I: 293, 339. II: 259 Pelletier (Nicolas), I: 294. III: 404 Perault (Charles), III: 380 Perboyre (Jacques), uncle, III: 458 Perboýre (Jacques), nephew, III: 381, 458

Perdu (Jacques), I: 533, 534 Péréfixe (Hardouin de), I: 540. III: 83, 234 Péreyret (Jacques), I: 485. III : 152 Périer (Marguerite), III: 168, 179 Périgord, I: 17 Périgueux, I: 21, 594-595. II: 146, 174, 175, 227, 229. III: 155, 472 Péronne, II: 460 Perpignan, III : 70 Perra (or Perrés) (Madame), I: 83 Perraud (Hugues), I: 497 Perrette (Sister), I: 423 Perrochel (François), I: 265. II: 124, 128, 130, 131, 146, 152, 155, 161, 176, 219, 227, 394. III: 273 Perugia, II: 460 Pesnelle (Jacques), II: 11, 24 Petau (Anne). See Traversay (Mme de) Petau (Denis) (Petavius), III: 145, 147 Peter (St.), I: 34, 505. III: 149, 156, 162 Petit-Bourbon (Hôtel du), Paris, I: 54, 135 Petit-Luxembourg (Hôtel du), Paris, I: 381 Petites Maisons (Hospice des), Paris, I: 401, 452. II: 127, 493. III: 281 Phidias: 199 Philippe (Brother), III: 34 Philip-Augustus, I: 146 Philip the Great, II: 200 Phillipe de Champagne, III : 384 Pianezze (Filipo di Simiane, Marquis de), II: 24-28. III: 62, 400 Pibrac (Michel du Faer de), I: 46 Picardy, I: 65, 93, 309, 400. II: 132, 298, 299, 398-442. III: 35, 168, 447, 459 Piccolomini (Coelio), III: 398 Picot (J.-P.), I: 250 Picoté (Charles), III: 178 Piedmont, I: 132. II: 28. III: 58, 63, 432 Pienne (Gilonne d'Harcourt, Marquise de), I: 293 Pierre (Claire-Madeleine de), III: 229, 239 Pierre de Saint-Joseph, III: 145 Pierre-Vive (Marie-Catherine de), I: 60 Pierron (Nicolas), I: 601, 602. III: 402, 403 Pignay (Nicolas), I: 544

Pillé (Jean), I: 525 Pilliers (Pierre), II: 116 Pina (Jean Cardoso de), I: 54 III: Pinard (Jeanne-Françoise), 236 Pincé (Marie-Claudine de), III: 216 Pindar, II: 199 Pingré (Pierre), III: 273 Pinon (M.), II: 241 Pinthereau (François), III: 124, 129, 137, 138 Pique (Bernard), III: 287-288 Pisieux, III: 32 Pitau (Nicolas), III: 378-381 Pithard (M.), I: 46 Pitié (Hôpital de la), Paris, I: 300 316. II: 127, 131, 282, 297, III: 172, 179, 438 Pius V, Pope, III: 151, 153, 174, 422 Pius VII, Pope, I: 129 Pius IX, Pope, III: 470 Pius X, Pope, III: 464 Plancoët, I : 587, 591 Planton (Claude), III: 459 Plasencia, II: 165, 166 Plassière (Marguerite), II: 261 Plato, II: 197 Plessala, III: 44 Pleurtuit, III: 43 Pliny, II: 198 Ploërmel, I: 583 Ploësquelec (Guillaume), II: 3 Pluyette (Jean), I: 146 Poeydavant (Abbé), I: 1, 512 Poisson (Geneviève), I: 339, 365 II: 275 Poissy, I: 179 Poitiers, I: 361, 533, 538. II: 211 231, 458, 459, 468. III: 78, 114, 124, 134, 135, 403, 490 Poitou, I: 533, 534. II: 130, 485. III: 45, 98, 124 Poland, I: 292, 332–335, 382, 385, 440–448, 511, 600, 608. II: 41– 50, 51, 480. III : 240, 282, 315, 368 Polangis (Jacques), I: 600 Poli (Oscar de), I: 6 Polignac (Auguste-Jules), III: 436 Pollalion (François), I: 300 Demoiselle), I: 217, 222, 238, Pollalion 240, 270, 292, 295, 300-305, 307. III: 80, 272, 299, 490 Pomponne (Bellièvre de), II: 297 Ponbuisson (Mme), I: 293 Poncher (Étienne de), I: 162 Ponsonailhe (Charles), III: 383

Pont-à-Mousson, I: 252. II: 371, 381, 382, 384, 387, 389 Pont-Beauvoison, II: 389 Pontcarré (Françoise de), I: 293. II: 308 Pontchartrain (Elisabeth Phelippeaux de), III: 251, 254 Pont-de-Veyle, I: 72 Pont-de-Vie (Hôtel de), Lucon, I: 543, 544 Ponthoise (Canon Theologian of), II: 211 Pontoise, I 182, 186. II: 148. III: 310 Pontoux, I: 10 Pont-Saint-Pierre-Marigny, I: 67 Pont-Sainte-Maxence, I: 219 Ponts-de-Cé, I: 424, 546 Porchères (Laugier de), I: 46 Portail (Antoine), I: 38, 56, 116, 145, 150, 152–153, 231, 349, 419– 421, 463, 469–473, 486, 488, 492, 496, 500, 563, 589. II: 6, 219, 334, 439, 454. III: 7, 29, 33, 34, 350, 391 Port d'Ablevoie, I: 424 Portes (Marquis de), III: 108 Port-Royal, İ: 195, 334, 436, 523. II: 423, 445, 473, 477. III: 87, 94, 122, 141, 164, 167, 168, 176-180, 186, 188 Port-Sainte-Marie, II: 249 Portugal, II: 52. III: 286, 288 Posen, II: 46 Posnania, II: 48 Posny (Jacques), II: 41, 47 Potier (Augustin), I: 153, 211, 213, 256-257. II: 176. III: 86, 90, 148, 327, 328 Poujoulat (J.-J.-F.), I: 330, 331. III: 85 Poulaillon (Marie de Lumague, Demoiselle). See Pollalion Poulet (Marie), II: 439 Poupinet (M.), III: 447 Pouy, I: 2-6, 9-15, 123, 124. III: 265, 317-319, 468, 469, 471, 476 Poymartet, I: 12 Pra (Anne-Françoise de), II: 44 Pratuque (Françoise), II: 261 Prausac (Marchioness of), II: 311 Prévault (Jacques), II : 261 Prévost (Chanoine A.), I : 274, 275, 545, 547, 54⁸, 549 Prévost (Louise-Christine), I: 366. II: 437 Prévost (Nicolas), II: 94, 95, 97, 98, 106, 112 Prières (Jean Jauhaud, Abbé de), III: 124, 126, 132

Prioux (Stanislas), II: 415 Pronis (M. de), II: 56-58, 64, 85, 93 Prost (Ennemond), I: 83 Protogène, II: 199 Proust (Jean), II: 410, 431 *Provence*, I: 88, 176, 564, 569. II: 330, 335, 347. III: 31 Prunel (Louis), I: 22. II: 179 *Prussia*, I: 331 Puget (Étienne), I: 265, 568 Puisieux (Pierre Brulart, Marquis de Sillery, Vicomte de), I: 523 Pyrenees (Treaty of), II: 398

Q

Quebec, III: 402 Quelen (Hyacinthe-Louis de), III: 433-435, 437, 438, 439, 443, 445, 446, 447 Quemadeuc (Sebastien de), III: 402 Quercy, III: 100 Quevillon, II: 404 Queyras, I: 129 Quiers, II: 556 Quilebæuf, II: 208 Quimper-Corentin, III: 209 Quiney, I: 171 Quinze-Vingts (Hôpital des), Paris, I: 270. II: 127

R

Racconigi, III: 61 Racine (Jean), I: 321. III: 167 Raconis (Abra de), III: 123, 147, 148 Raggi (Baliano), II: 18 Ragny (Hippolyte de Gondi, Marquise de), I: 89. III: 231, 244 Ragny (Mlles de), III: 233, 244 Ramaka (King of Anosy), II: 53, 56, 65, 67, 69–71, 81–83 Rambervillers, II : 390, 391 Rancé (Armand-Jean le Bouthillier de), II: 151 Ranquine (Maison de), Pouy, I: 4, 6-9. III : 468, 469, 472 Rantigny, I: 415 Rapin (René), I: 522. III: 123, 130, 172, 178 Raportebled (Madeleine), I: 445, 456 Rathkeale, II: 33 Ratier (M.), I: 410 Raucourt, 1: 571, 573 Ravaillac (François), I: 429

Ravenez (L.-W.), I: 250 Ré (Ile de), I: 120 Rebelliau (Alfred), III: 275, 284 Rechau (Baron de), III: 44 Redier (Anthony), III: 475 Redom, II : 238 Regnard (Mathieu), II: 139-140, 371, 375, 385-393 Régnoust (Thomas), II: 302 Reims, I: 252, 255, 260, 330, 331, 361, 576. II: 162, 227, 399, 408, 410, 416, 418, 419, 422, 424, 427, 431, 433, 434, 441, 483. III : 32, 400, 403 Remiremont, II: 391 Remoulle (Notre-Dame at de) Mezens, I: 23 Remus, II: 260 Renar (François), I: 534. II: 124, 130, 131, 153. III: 273, 476 Renaudin (Paul), III: 475 Renaut (Docteur), III: 450 Rennes, I: 584, 587, 588. II: 452, 453. III: 209, 237, 403, 429 Renouard (Jules), II: 444 Renty (Elizabeth de Balzac, Baronne de), I: 293 Renty (Gaston, Baron de), I: 324. II: 394-395. III: 3, 273 Rethel, I: 269, 318, 460. II: 400, 410, 416, 419, 421, 422, 425, 427, 428, 430, 431, 441, 458 Retz, I: 60 Retz (Duc de). See Gondi (Pierre de) Retz (Cardinal de). See Gondi (Henri) and Gondi (Jean-Francois-Paul de) Reuil, I: 533 Rhodes (Alexandre), III: 286 Ribemont, II: 400, 419 Ribier (Abbé), II: 151 Richard (François), II: 19 Richard (Francois, Cardinal), III: 496 Richarménil, II : 367 Richelieu, I: 272, 337, 350, 402-406, 423, 501, 521, 533-545. II : 58, 162, 449, 450, 454, 455. III : 21, 25, 386 Richelieu (Armand du Plessis, Cardinal de), I: 62, 250, 261, 325, 381, 523, 532, 535-538, 562, 571. II: 3, 56, 144-145, 162, 176, 179, 226, 237, 238, 240, 241, 369, 371, 389. III: 26, 70, 98, 104, 122, 129, 130, 141, 199-201, 203, 204, 206-209, 273, 408 Richelieu (Armand-Jean du Plessis, Duc de), II: 324

- Richelieu (Marie-Madeleine Therese de Vignerod, Demoiselle de), I: 203 Richer (François), III: 425 Richon (Jean), III: 463 Ricière (Toinette), II: 261 Rideau (Louise-Christine), I: 366 Ridolfi (Père), II: 247 Rieux (René de), II : 234 Riez, I: 187 Rigoleuc (Jean), III: 19 Rivet (Jacques), I: 505 Robiche (Louis), I: 334 Robinault (Dom), I: 582, 583 Robineau (Louis), I: 38, 56, 174, 290, 516, 559. II : 298, 407, 408. III: 14, 82, 86, 111, 112, 343, 347, 377, 378 Roch (Jean), II: 427 Rochechouart (François de), III: 27I Rochefort, I: 577 Rocherolles (Pierre de), I: 67 Roches (Les), I 398 Rocourt-lez-Meulan, II 261 Rocroi, I 329. II: 431. III: 75 Rodez, I: 541. II: 146. III: 429, 476, 480 Rodriguez (Alphonse), II: 221, III: 343, 355 Rohan (Armand-Gaston, Cardinal de), III: 430 Rohan (Henri Chabot, Duc de), II: 459 Roissy (M. de), III: 216 Roma (Giulio, Cardinal), III: 160 Romagna, III: 48 Roman (Mme), III: 449 Romans, I: 533 Rome, I: 22, 24, 35, 36, 48, 52, 54, 156-158, 260, 324, 326, 361, 470-472, 476, 479, 480, 481, 486-490, 492, 493, 496-499, 506, 512, 526, 553, 569, 570, 590, 591. II : 1-16, 23, 58, 84, 96, 103, 111, 164-168, 170, 171, 241, 243, 311. III: 27, 33, 47, 48, 52, 53, 91, 101, 115, 121, 130, 144, 145, 149, 152, 155, 156, 159-161, 168-170, 180, 260, 262, 263, 271, 283, 286, 288-289, 302, 312, 315, 346, 347, 371, 410, 419, 420, 426 Romilly (Louise Goulas, Dame de), I: 293 Romulus, II: 260 Rondet (M.), II : 371 Ropartz (S.), I 591 Rosalie, III: 410 Roscius, II: 199 Rose, 1: 550. II: 211
- Rosen-Worms, II: 400, 414, 415 Ross, II: 38 Rosset (Edouard), I: 529. III: 480, 487 Rotondo (Rome), II : 2. III : 195 Rouelle (Barbara), I: 405 Rouen, I: 66, 252, 255, 260, 361, 444. II: 46, 171, 176, 179, 404, 496. III: 31, 42, 144, 196, 240, 246 Rougemont (Quartier de), Sevran. I: 163, 169, 175, 515. III: 390 Rougemont (Comte de), I: 76-79 Rousseau (François), II: 239, 240 Roussel (Jacques), II: 379, 380 Rousselet (Claude de), I: 19 Rousselet (Firmin de), I: 19 Rousset (Denis), I: 13 Roville, II: 367 Roye, I: 309-311. III: 447 Rozoy, II: 399 Rubelles, I: 314 Rueil, I: 326. II: 176, 443, 446. III: 81 Ruffi (Antonio di), I: 117, 127. II : 327, 328, 335 Rufisque, II : 116 Rumelin (Michel Thepault, Seigneur de), I: 592-593 S Sabine, II : 5
- Sable (Madeleine de Souvre, Marquise de), III: 145
- Saché, III: 44
- Sachet (Abbé A.), III: 433, 452
- Sackville (Louise-Elizabeth), III: 425
- Saclas, II: 490
- Saclay, I: 516
- Sadia, II: 54, 55, 56
- Sadot (Claude), I: 391
- Saint-Aignan, II: 151
- Sainctot (Marie Dalibray, Dame), I: 238, 292
- Saint-Amant, III : 38, 39
- Saint-Amour (Louis-Gorin de), III : 159, 160, 162, 170, 174
- Saint-André (Parish of), Paris, I: 210, 309, 336
- Saint-Andre (Hôtel), Paris, III : 228
- Sant Angelo (Castle of), Rome, III : 428
- Saint-Antoine (Abbey), II: 27, 28
- Saint-Antoine-de-Viennois (St. An-
- thony of Vienna), II: 244
- Saint-Árnault, II: 490 Saint-Arnoul, Metz, II: 238
- Saint-Aubin, I: 546

Saint-Barthelemy (Parish of), Paris, | Saint-Germain-en-Laye, I: 336 Saint-Basile (Marie-Therese de), III: 425 Saint Benedict, II: 2 Saint-Benoit (Parish of St. Benedict), Paris, I: 210, 224, 270. II: 211, 238, 255. III: 167 Saint-Bonaventure (Ant.-M. de), II: 22 Saint-Brieuc, II: 453. III: 44 Saint-Caprais, I: 11 Saint-Cassien, I: 538 Saint-Chamarant (De la Roque), III: 98 Saint-Charles (Seminary of), Paris, I: 262, 514, 526, 577. II: 20, 174, 463 St. Christopher (Island of), II: 496 Saint-Cloud, I: 208, 269. II: 124, 298, 401, 460, 462 Saint-Cyr, III: 39, 271 Saint-Cyran, III: 114 Saint-Cyran (Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbé de), I: 2, 172, 479. II: 124. III: 113-143, 145, 146, 171, 174, 180, 300, 408, 409, 418 Saint-Denis, I: 162, 318, 325, 333, 337, 350, 385, 418, 419, 514, 527. II: 240, 242, 400-463, 474, 487, 493. III: 72, 73, 88, 93, 182, 185, 188, 189, 212-214, 216, 250, 251-256, 355, 415, 416, 417, 422, 443 Saint-Denis de la Charte, II : 255 Saint-Eloy (Prison), Paris, II: 307 Saint-Etienne-à-Arnes, II: 425, 426, 427 Saint-Étienne-du-Mont (Parish of), Paris, I: 276, 336, 349. III: 382 Saint-Eustache (Parish of), Paris, I: 62, 154, 210, 270, 276 Saint-Fargeau, I: 338, 454 Saint Faron (Abbey of), Meaux, II: 239 Saint Floran, II: 124 Saint-Flour, I: 549, 556. II: 229. III: 34, 271, 403 Saint-Germain (Faubourg), Paris, I: 304. II: 128, 130. III: 9, 217 Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois (Parish of), Paris, I: 304, 336, 349. III: 82, 159, 286, 399, 401, 406, 447 Saint-Germain-des-Champs, II: 238. See Colombet Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris, II: 178, 239, 242, 255, 307. III: 269

I: 247, 269, 274, 337, 350, 402. II: 133-135, 142, 146, 368, 443, 446, 447, 448, 460, 472. III : 71-73, 87, 92, 200, 201, 267 Saint-Gervais (Parish of), Paris, I: 336, 349. II : 395 San Giovanni (Parish of), Rome, II: 2 San Giovanni Mercatteli, Rome, II: 2, 7 Saint-Gobain, 11: 401 Saint-Hilaire, I: 579 Saint-Honoré (Parish of), Paris. See Brousse Saint-Ilpize, II: 131 Saint-Jacques (Faubourg), Paris, III: 194, 228, 231, 235, 245 Saint - Jacques - de - la - Boucherie, Paris, I: 309, 336 Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas (Parish of), Paris, I: 336. III: 142, 228 Saint James of Compostello, I: 12 Saint-Jean (Nicolas de), II: 124, 137, 142. III: 458 Saint-Jean (Hôpital), Agers, I: 405 Saint-Jean d'Angely, II : 207 Saint Jean de la Citadelle (Parish of). Metz, II: 140 Saint-Jean-de-Luz, I: 542. II: 115. III: 189 Saint-Jean-en-Grève (Parish of), Paris, I: 336, 365. III: 195, 306, 404 Saint John Lateran (Rome), II: 14, 165. III: 477 Saint-Josse (Parish of), Paris, II: 153. III: 288, 476 Saint-Jure (Jean-Baptiste de), III : 355 Saint-Landry, Paris, II: 257, 263 Saint-Lary-de-Bellegarde (Octave), I: 140 Saint-Laurent (Parish of), Paris, I: 159, 163, 165, 166, 336, 339, 350, 398, 467, 518, 573. II: 271. III: 65, 404, 419 Saint-Laurent (Ile). See Madagascar Saint-Lazare, I: 2, 21, 24, 39, 41, 144, 159, 160-176, 180, 258, 264, 265, 267, 281, 285, 290, 327, 360, 389, 390, 394, 398, 401, 406, 456, 469, 477, 478, 495, 496, 497, 501, 502, 503, 508, 511-529, 539, 543, 548, 564, 569, 570, 573, 582, 598. II : 13, 14, 17, 46, 47, 50, 51, 59, 101-103, 110-112, 118, 122-124, 126, 137, 139, 144-147, 150-152,

155, 157-160, 161, 163, 165, 174, 183-185, 192, 219-220, 227, 244, 262, 271, 283–284, 288, 297, 299– 302, 309-311, 313-315, 319, 333, 345, 361, 364, 369, 380, 391, 393, 396, 402, 406, 438, 444, 447, 449, 450, 451-456, 463, 465, 475, 479, 482-484, 487, 489, 499. III: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7–18, 29, 30, 31, 35, 36, 80, 110, 111, 116, 117, 126, 127, 170, 175, 176, 178, 242, 257, 258, 263, 270, 277, 282, 291, 293-296, 298, 302, 303, 305, 309, 310, 312, 315, 316, 318, 320, 321, 323-325, 334, 336, 341, 342, 385, 389-391, 393, 396, 398, 404, 408, 419, 422, 424, 428, 433, 438, 451, 458, 476, 477, 479, 482, 487, 490 Saint-Léonard-de-Chaumes, I: 47, 67, 249 Saint-Leu (Parish of), Paris, I: 318, 366, 344, 349 Saint-Louis (Hôpital), Paris, I: 315. II: 475 Saint-Louis (Ile), Paris, II: 486 Saint-Louis-en-l'Ile (Parish of), Paris, III: 404 Saint-Lucien, Blauvais, II: 238 Saint-Lye, III : 237 Saint-Magloire, Paris, I: 255. II: 176, 179, 324 Saint-Maixent, II: 238 Saint-Malo, I: 182, 461, 583, 585, 587. II: 242. III: 402 Saini-Mamès, Langres, I: 144 Saint-Marc (Petit), II: 490 Saint-Marcel, Paris, II: 255 Saint-Martin, Paris, I: 336, 390. II: 242, 307 Saint-Martin-des-Champs, Paris, I: 559. II: 255 Saint-Martin (Chanoine de), I: 15, 20, 37, 38. III : 319 Saint-Martin (Jean de), I: 37, 44 Saint-Martin d'Agès (Cesar de). See Agès Saint-Maur, III: 208-209, 404, 406 Saint-Maurice (Island of), II: 85 Saint-Maurille, I: 546 Saint-Méen, I: 365, 488, 579, 582-584, 586, 591, 592, 603. II: 14, 174, 242, 449, 452-454. III: 43, 418, 419 Saint-Mélaine, I: 583 Saint-Menges, I: 571, 573 Saint-Menges (Christine de Marsanne, Baronne de), II: 384 Saint-Merry (Parish of), Paris, I: 183, 349, 524. II: 255, 484. See Du Hamel (Henri)

Saint-Mesmin, II: 121

- Saint Mihiel, II: 371, 376, 378, 384, 386, 390 Saint-Nazaire, II : 31, 85, 104, 105
- Saint-Nicaise, II: 433
- Saint-Nicolas (Seminary of), Paris, I: 288. II: 177–180, 184
- Saint Nicolas (M. de), II: 375
- Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs (Parish of), Paris, I: 189, 315, 316. II: 486. III: 220, 221
- Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, Paris, I: 208-210, 215, 224, 227, 255, 256, 257, 263, 270, 284, 316, 336, 349, 388, 416, 525. II: 316, 319, 483. III : 4, 150, 175, 190, 222, 257, 259, 260, 273. See Féret (Froyer)
- Saint-Nicolas-du-Port, **II**: 388, 389.
- Saint-Nicolas de Grosse Sauve. See Grosse Sauve
- Saint-Ouen, Rouen, II: 242
- Saint-Ouen-l'Aumóne, II: 125
- Saint-Papoul, III: 158
- Saint-Paul (Parish of), Paris, I: 273, 276, 307, 336, 349, 378. II: 482
- Saint-Paul (Anne de Caumont, Comtesse de), III : 220, 221
- Saint Peter's, Rome, II: 165. III: 427
- Saint-Pierre (M. de), III : 271, 272
- Saint-Pierre-au-Mont, II: 238
- Saint-Pol-de-Léon, II: 234
- Saint-Poncy (Léo de), I: 47 Saint-Pons (Bishop of), Persin de Montgaillard, I: 8
- Saint-Pourçain, II : 14, 151. III : 7, 8, 431
- Saint-Preuil, I: 577
- Saint-Projet, I: 560
- Saint-Quentin, II: 410, 422, 424, 425, 430, 431, 434, 441
- Saint-Raymond (Collège de), Toulouse, I: 17
- Saint-René (Hôpital), Nantes, I: 424 Saint-Riquier, II: 238
- Saint-Roch, Paris, I: 336. II: 315-317. III: 441
- Saint-Sacrement (Compagnie du), I: 237, 240, 289, 524. II : 283, 293, 294, 296, 304-307, 311, 315-319, 324, 406, 409, 482, 484. III : 95-99, 260-262, 270, 271-285
- San Sacramento (Parish of), Turin, II: 24, 27
- Saint-Sauveur (Parish of), Paris, I: 183, 190, 208, 210, 224, 270, 336, 337, 349

Saint-Sauveur (Abbey of), Sabina, II: 5 Saint-Sebastien, II: 115 Saint-Sepulchre (Priory of), 1: 555 Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, I: 18 Saint-Sever. I: 8. II: 242 Saint-Séverin (Parish of), Paris, I: 276, 336 Saint-Simon (Louis de Rouvroy, Duc de), I: 479 Saint-Sixtus (Hospice of), Rome, II: 4 Saint-Soubé, I: 24 Saint-Souplet, II: 427 Saint-Sulpice, I: 21, 174, 210, 276, 326, 336, 349, 525, 526, 560. II: 124, 129, 130, 151, 178, 180, 486. III : 9, 98, 99, 100, 102, 150, 260, 262, 264, 266-267, 269-270, 283, 314, 404, 406 Saint-Sulpice (Claude-Antoine Hebrard de), I: 560 Saint-Thomas (Jean de), II: 52 Saint Thomas Aquinas (Monastery of), Paris, II: 124, 131, 153 Saint-Victor, Paris, I: 512, 566-568. II: 175, 255 Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (Parish of), Paris, III: 438, 441 Saint-Vivien, I: 578. II: 174 Saint-Yon (Françoise-Catherine de), III: 215, 229 Saint-Yves (Parish of), Rome, II: 2 Sainte-Anne (Seminary of), Metz, II: 144 Sainte-Beuve (Mme de), III: 218 Sainte-Beuve (Mlle de), III: 220 Santa Bibiana (Parish of), Rome, II: 2 Sainte-Chapelle (La), Paris, I: 171. II: 433. III: 344 Sainte-Croix (Parish of the Holy Cross), Warsaw, II: 41, 43, 45-47, 49, 50 Sainte-Croix (Cardinal de), II: 168 Sainte-Foy, 1: 594 Sainte-Geneviève (Parish of), Paris, I: 512, 513. II: 243, 255, 479, 486 Sainte-Geneviève (Abbey of), Paris, I: 168, 172. III: 12, 320, 406. See Faure (La Rochefoucauld, Cardinal de) Saint-Magdalen (Convent of), Paris, III: 182, 216, 217-227, 299. Saint-Magdalen (Parish of), Aix, III: 289 Sainte-Marie (Island of), II: 69,

78, 95, 97-99

Sainte-Menehould, I: 460. II: 435, 436 Sainte-Pelagia (Refuge), Paris, I: 316. II: 297 Sainte-Perrine, III: 186 Sainte-Reine, III: 489 Saintes, I: 47, 577. II: 147, 162, 163, 170, 171, 174, 176, 227, 236, 253, 449. III : 34, 46, 92 Saintonge, I: 322. II: 130 Salé, II : 365 Salhorgne (Dominic), III: 436, 439, 442 Salinis (Père A. de), I: 310. III: 194, 228, 231 Salpêtrière (Hospice de la), Paris, I: 338, 454. II: 294, 296, 297, 302 Samaria, II: 367 Sambo (Andrian), II: 54, 55 Samier (Marie-Monique), I: 310. III: 225-226 Sancey, I: 547 Sanejehan (Pere), II: 239 San Lucas, II: 52, 54, 55, 56 Sannois, I: 218, 269 Santa Cruz (Island of), II: 52, 53, 54, 55 Sant'Andrea di Cortone, III: 54 Santé (Hôpital de la), Paris, I: 302 Santeuil (M. de), I: 412 Santeuil (Mlle de), I: 412 Sardinia, III: 425 Sarlat, II: 145, 153, 154, 227, 235. III : 155, 403. See Sevin (Nicolas) Saron (François Bochard de), III: 410, 425. Sarragossa, I: 20 Sarsina, III: 48 Sart, II : 401 Sastri, III: 53 Saujon (Anne Campet de), III: 269-270 Saul, I: 228, 521 Saulier (Pierre), III: 410 Saumur, I: 424 Sauval (Henri), II: 283. III: 490 Savaron (Jean), I: 46 Savary de Breves (François de), I: 32 Saverne, II: 389 Saveuses (Charles de), II: 433 Savigliano, II : 27. III : 61 Savonnerie (La), Paris, II: 297 Savoy, I: 551, 553. II: 24, 163. See Charles-Emmanuel Savoy (Maurice, Cardinal of), I: 132

- Savreux (Charles), II: 404 Scalenghe, III: 60 Schænher (Abbé), II: 178 Schomberg (M. de), III: 273 Schomberg (Anne de la Guiche,
- Duchesse de), I: 293, 415. III: 236, 244, 245
- Scipion (Hospice de), Paris, II: 207
- Scoliège (Anne), I: 432
- Scotland, I: 480, 511, 608. II:30, 36-40, 41. III : 280
- Scotti (Mgr Ranuzzo), II: 9
- Secondat (Collège), Toulouse, I: 17
- Sedan, I: 269, 305, 337, 350, 411-413, 424, 460, 529, 570-571. II: 410, 429, 430, 435, 437, 441, 443. III: 407
- Séguier (Charlotte), II: 383
- Séguier (Dominique), I: 556, 601, 602. II: 241. III: 72-74, 76-78, 86, 262
- Séguier (Madeleine Fabri, Dame), Ĭ: 239, 292, 305, 321–322
- Séguier (Pierre), I: 321, 558. II: 136. III: 36, 37
- Seguin (Jerôme), III: 147
- Séguiran (Gaspard) II, : 198, 203, 213
- Ségur (A., Marquis de), III: 448
- Ségur (Mgr Louis-Gaston-Adrien de), III: 448.
- Senault (Jean-François), I: 323
- Senaux (Nicolas), I: 549
- Sené (Nicolas), II: 490
- Seneca, III: 255
- Seneçy (Marie-Catherine de la Rochfoucauld, Baronne de), I: 306. II: 243. III: 86, 90, 203, 207, 233
- Senlis, I: 207, 256, 365. II: 496. III: 36, 260. See Des Lions
- Sens, I: 64, 100, 105, 107, 361. III: 158, 164, 176, 429, 458. Serain, I: 218
- Séraud (Jean), I: 73
- Sérevillers, I: 105
- Sergis (Robert de), I: 531. II: 147. III: 34, 37, 38 Serpette (Stephane), I: 4, 5
- Serqueux, I: 366, 419 Servien (Abel), III: 79
- Serv, I: 607
- Sesmaisons (Pierre de), III: 145, 146
- Sévigné (Marie de Rabutin-Chantel, Marquise de), I: 317. III: 189, 245
- Sévigné (Françoise-Marguerite de), III: 189, 245

- Sevin (Gertrude-Elisabeth), III: 196. 197
- Sevin (Advocat), III: 196
- Sevin (Marie Veron, Demoiselle), I: 222. III: 196
- Sevin (Nicolas), II: 153, 154, 227, 335. III : 110, 155, 273, 391
- Sevran, I: 163, 327. II: 515. III: 391
- Sfondrat (Comte de), II: 401
- Siccardi (Carlo Domenico), III: 451, 452
- Sicily, II: 358
- Sierra Leone, II: 95
- Signy, II: 238
- Silesia, II: 47, 49
- Sillery, III: 32, 40
- Sillery (Françoise-Madeleine Brulart de), III : 233, 244
- Sillery (Nicolas Brulart de), I: 523 Sillery (Noël Brulart, Commandeur de), I : 140, 265, 311, 523, 545-
- 548, 551-553, 554. II: 151, 163. III: 32, 38, 40, 194, 195, 215, 225, 233, 236, 243, 485
- Silly (Antoine de), I: 61
- Silly (Françoise-Marguerite de). See Gondi (Françoise-Marguerite de)
- Simard (Henri), I: 129, 564. II: 333. III: 476
- Simon (René), II: 46, 47. III: 482
- Simonnet, Lieutenant-General at Rethel, II: 422
- Singlin (Nicolas), II: 125. III: 133, 163, 172, 179-180
- Siqueyra (Lopez de), II: 52
- Sirmond (Jacques), III: 145 Sixtus IV, Pope, III: 121
- Skyddy (John), II: 3 Skye (Island of), II: 38
- Socrates, II: 205
- Soissons, I: 101, 105, 113, 207,
- 576. II: 410, 416, 417. III: 403 Soissons (Hôtel de), Paris, I: 331 Soissons (Olympe Mancini, Com tesse de), III : 245
- Soisy, I: 238 Sokolka, II: 42, 43, 45
- Soleure, I: 323 Solomon, III:
- 134
- Soliman (Reis), I: 119
- Solminihac (Alain de), I: 246, 250, 457, 458, 559-662, 594. II: 172-173, 176, 189, 229, 235, 238, 244, 493, 495. III : 100, 110, 155,
 - 163, 273, 283
- Sommepy, II : 425 Sorbois, II : 401
- Sore, I: 43

Soubiroux, I: 560 Souillard (Jean), I: 59 Sourdis (François d'Escoubleau. Chevalier de), II: 96, 97 Sourdis (François d'Escoubleau, Cardinal de), I: 250, 253, 263. II: 120 Sourdis (Jeanne de Montluc, Marquise de), I: 328 Souscarrière, III: 215 Souscarrière (Anne des Novers de), I: 279, 292, 294, 318 Souscarrière (Marguerite Grangier de), I: 294. II: 262 Souvre (Renouard dé), III : 77, 271 Souyn (Bailiff of), Reims, II: 414 Soyecourt (Marquis de), III: 216 Soyecourt (François-Antoinette de), III: 216 Spada (Bernardo, Cardinal), III: 160 Spain, I: 7, 287, 523. II: 8, 9, 115, 166, 298, 337, 442, 470. III : 114, 189, 241 Stella (Sauveur), III: 1, 3-5 Stenay, I: 460. II: 391, 435, 437 Stouf (Jean-Baptiste), II: 278-279 Strich (Thomas), Mayor of Limerick, II: 35 Stuart (House of), III: 213 Suarez, I: 493 Subiaco, III : 52 Suffren (Jean), I: 308, 319. **II** : 221. III: 271, 355 Sulla, II: 200 Sully, I: 249, 328. II: 459 Sully (Charlotte Séguier, Duchesse de), I: 293 Sully (Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de), II: 212 Surennes, I: 223 Survire (Nicolas), III: 397 Sutherland, II: 38 Suzanne, II: 202 Sweden, II: 43, 47 Switzerland, I: 323, 331

т

Table-Bay, II: 116 Taconnet (Chanoine), III: 473 Taffignon (Simon), I: 549 Tallemant des Reaux (Gédeon), I: 322. II: 210 Talmont (Henri de la Trémoille, Prince de), III: 3 Talon (Françoise Doujat, Dame), II: 434 Tamarile de Litera, I: 3

Tambonneau (Michel de), I: 308 Tamizey de Larroque (Philippe), I: 20 Taoni (Giovanni-Batista), II: 1, 3, 4 Tarbé (M.), III : 458 Tarbes, I: 16, 21 Tardif (M.), III: 134 Tarrisse (Grégoire, Dom), II: 238, 242 Tartas, I: 10 Tavannes (Jacques de Saulx, Comte de), II: 460 Teillet (Abbé L.), I: 300 Ténès (Cape), I: 119 Ternay, III: 486 Thebaid (The), I: 587. II: 199 Theiner (Augustine), I: 251. II 178 Themistocles, II: 199 Theresa (St.), I: 3. II: 293 Thermopylæ, II: 200 Theron (Andrian), II: 102 Thibault (Louis), I: 489, 491 Thiérache, II: 419 Thiers, II: 246 Thiers (Jean-Baptiste), I: 250 Thieulin (René), I: 126 Tholanghare, II: 87 Tholard (Jacques), I: 497, 553. II: 291. III: 32 Thomas Aquinas (St.), III: 301 Thomas of Villanova (St.), III: 44I, 445 Thomel (M.), II: 241 Thouvignon (Dominique), I: 530 Thraso, II: 200 Thurles, II: 33 Tilh, I: 24 Timomachus, II: 199, 200 Timotheus, II: 199 Tisserand (Lazare-Maurice), I: 47 Tollue (Marie-Simone), III: 221, 223, 225 Tonkin, I: 278. III: 122, 273, 287, 288 Tonnay-Charente, I: 121, 122 Torre (Hyacinthe), III: 452 Toul, I: 127, 457, 500, 530-531. II: 139, 142, 369, 371, 372, 373-376, 379, 384, 389. III: 18, 43, 403 Toulon, II : 335. III : 400 Toulouse, I : 14, 16–21, 24, 26, 27, 176, 252, 329, 461. II : 176, 179, 247, 249. III: 31, 38, 114, 136, 191, 455 Touraine, I: 500. II: 130 Tournelle (La), Paris, II: 127, 317-321, 323

- Tournelles (Hôtel des), Paris, I: 311 Tournely (Honoré), III: 487 Tournemine (René-Joseph de), III : 423 Tournier (Eugéne), III: 496 Tournon, II : 487 Tournus, I: 525. II: 124. III: 7, 283 Tours, I: 424, 539, 541. II: 208, 240. III: 102, 233, 288, 312, 377 Toussaint (Barbara), I: 407 Toutblanc (Louis), I: 576 Tratebas (Antoine), II: 23 Traversay (Anne Petau, Dame de), I: 239, 288, 292, 313, 324. II: 406 Traversay (Regnauld, Seigneur de), I: 324 Tréguier, I: 461, 592, 593. II: Trent (Council of), I: 1, 23, 59, 194 494. II: 178, 179. III: 112, 117, 119, 135, 139, 140, 153, 156, 157, 174, 187 Trinité (Hôpital de la), Paris, II: 255 Trinité (Marie d'Hanivel. Mère de la), I : 545, 546 Tripoli, II : 337, 365 Tristan (Claude), II : 124 Trois Evêchés (Province de), II: 368, 375 Tronson (Mme), III : 269-270 *Troyes*, I: 129, 130, 500, 529, 545– 547, 550, 576, 601. II: 44, 162. III: 43, 91, 200, 237, 240, 403, 429. See Breslay Troyes (Hôtel de), Paris, I: 544, 548. II: 499. Trulin (Mme), I: 293 Trumeau (Marie-Marthe), I: 429, 432, 458, II: 437 Tsiamboni (King of Anosy), II: 52, 54, 55 Tubeuf (Presidente), I: 293 Tuileries (The palace of), Paris, II: 448 Tulle, III : 410, 411 Tunis, I: 26, 29, 32, 40, 130, 326, 579. II : 337, 338, 340-347, 349, 350, 357-359, III: 432, 458 361, 363, 376. III: 432, 458 Turco (Tommaso) or Turchi, O.P., II: 247-250 Turenne (Henri de la Tour, Vicomte de), II : 277, 400, 428, 459-463, 472 Turgis (Elisabeth), I: 339, 348, 408 418, 424
- Turin, I: 269, 556. II: 24-29 147. III: 47, 58, 61, 346, 348, 371, 389, 392, 393, 451, 452, 453, 456, 460
 - Turpin (Pierre), II: 111
 - Turpin (Euphrosine), III: 229, 239
 - Turkey, II: 341 Tuscany, II: 347

294

Tuscany (Cosimo), Grand Duke of, III: 405, 406, 460

U

Uist (Isle of), II: 38 Ukraine, II: 43, 46 Ulysses, II : 200 Urban VIII, Pope, I : 158, 470, 490, 512. II: 160, 244. III: 22, 144, 145, 151, 153, 174, 222 Ursula (St.), II : 293 Usseau, III: 46 Ussel, I : 385, 454-456. II : 493 Uzès, III : 271 Uzureau (François-Constant), I:

v

Vabres. See Habert Vachet (Jean-Antoine), I: 307 Vadencourt, II: 400 Val-de-Grâce, Paris, I: 54, 321. III: 83, 90, 211, 246 Valadier (André), II : 212, 213 Valcroissant, III : 159 Valençay (Léonor d'Estampes), I: 571, 572. II: 13 Valence, I: 567. II: 163, 176, 181. III: 158, 260, 261 Valenti (M.), III : 426 Vallet de Viriville, I : 146 Valpuiseaux, I: 438. II: 449. III: 403, 458 Valteline, I: 523 Vandamme (Alphonse), III: 401, 433 Vandæuvre, II : 367 Vandy, II: 425 Vannes, I: 588. 111: 19 Van Schuppen (Pierre), III: 37-8 380 Vanves, I: 269 Varize, I: 448 Varize (Mme de), I: 448 Vassy, III: 42 Vatican (The), Rome, II: 9 Vattelot-sur-Mer, I: 238

Vaucouleurs, II: 389

Vaugirard, II: 170, 176, 178, 179 Vaux (Metairie de), Richelieu, I: 533 Vaux (Guy Lasnier, Abbé de), I: 406, 407, 410. III: 4 Vaux-le-Vicomte, Maincy, I: 460 Velay, II: 131 Vence, II: 226 Vendôme (House of), III: 86 Vendy (Jean d'Apremont, Seigneur de), I : 178 Vendy (Innocente de Marillac, Dame de), I: 178 Venice, II : 497 Ventadour (Catherine-Suzanne de Themines de Montluc, Duchesse de), III: 320 Ventadour (Henri de Lévis, Duc, puis chanoine de), III: 72, 73, 77, 271, 283 Ventadour (Marie de la Guiche de Saint-Gerand, Duchesse de), I: 279, 292, 451, 454, 467 Venus, II: 198, 199 Venusia, xvii Verdenal, II: 392 Verdier (François), xvii, xviii Verdun, II : 371, 384, 387, 389, 390. III : 111, 403, 404 Vermois, II: 367 Verneuil, I : 219 Verneuil (Catherine-Henriette de Balsac-Entragues, Marquise de), II: 136, 211 Verneuil (Charlotte-Séguier, Duchesse de), I : 293 Vernon-sur-Seine, II: 389 Véron (François), II : 185. III: 196 Véronne (Alexandre), II : 454. III: 391, 397 Versailles, III: 208, 429, 452 Versenay, III: 32 Verteuil, III: 39 Verthamon (François de), II: 241 Verthamon (Marie Boucher d'Orsay, Dame de), I : 293 Vertus (N.-D. des), Aubervilliers, I: 525. III: 305 Vervins, II: 400, 429 Vetralle, III: 49 Veuillot (Eugène), III: 493, 495, 496 Vialart (Felix), I: 323. II: 124, 145, 226. III : 32, 41 Vic, II: 389 Vicherat (Jean-Claude), III: 452 Vieillescases (Guillaume), I: 23. III: 419, 421 Vienna (Austria), III: 451

Vienne (Dauphiné), III: 124 Viganego (Jacques-Philippe), III: 461 Vigneron (Avoie), I: 455 Viguier (Pierre), III : 381, 452 Villain (François), II : 84 Villarceaux (Anne Mangot, Seigneur de), II: 241, 375 Villars, III: 403 Ville-Abbé, II: 457. III: 96 Villecian, I: 100 Villeconin, III: 490 Villefranche (Jean-Vincent de Tulle de), I: 333 Villejuif, I: 269 Villèle (Jean - Baptiste - Seraphin -Joseph), III: 436 Villeneuve-la-Garenne, III : 403. 459 Villeneuve-sur-Gravois, I: 161, 304. II: 309, 473 Villeneuve-le-Roi, I: 307 Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, I: 217. II: 476, 486, 487 Villeneuve (Marie l'Huillier d'Interville, Dame de), I: 136, 292, 307-314, 324, 359. III: 194, 228, 229, 231, 236 Villepreux, I: 61, 95, 100, 116, 210, 223, 225. II: 298, 448, 449. III: 31 Villeroy (Nicolas de Neufville, Duc de), I : 540 Villers (Mile de), I: 335, 442, 443, 446 Villers-Saint-Sepulcre, II: 261, 262 Villesavin (Isabelle Blondeaux. Dame de), I: 238, 292 Villeseneux, I: 215 Villiers-le-Bel, I: 211 Villiers (Baron de), III: 216 Villiers (Anne-Louise de Verdelot de), IIÌ: 216 Vilna, II: 41, 46 Vilvaudé, III : 32 Vincennes, I: 269. II: 7, 8. III: 129, 131 Vincent (Francis), I: 87. II: 23 Vincent Ferrer (St.), III: 305, 421 Vincent de Xaintes (St.), I: 7 Vincy (Antoine Hennequin, Sieur de), I: 299, 519, 520, 525 Vins (Laurence Veyrac de Paulian, Marquise de), I: 569 Vintimite (Chendra Compand Chil Vintimille (Charles-Gaspard-Guillaume), III : 422, 487 Viole (Jacques), I : 325 Viole (Madeleine Deffita, Demoiselle), I: 279, 292, 305, 317, 325. II: 409

332-333

Virgil, II: 197, 198, 223 Viterbo, III: 49 Vivant (François), III: 402, 416, 428 Vivarais, II: 13 Vivian (Nicolas), I: 176. III: 31 Viviers, III: 38 Vogt (Albert), III: 480 Voiture (Vincent), I: 292: III: 81 Voragine (Jacques de), II: 202

Watebled (Jean), I: 38. II: 489 Watel (François), I: 526. III: 402, 406, 423, 460 Westphalia, II: 398, 399 'White (Francis), II: 30, 36, 39-40 Wielopolski (Prince), II: 46 Wladislas IV, King of Poland, I:

Z

Zacheus, III: 221 Zamet (Jean), I: 135 Zamet (Sébastien), I: 22, 144. II: 176. III : 126 Zelazewski (Casimir), II: 41, 45, 47

w Walsh (Patrick), II: 19

Warmia, I: 333 Warsaw, I: 441, 442, 445. II: 42-45, 47-48, 49. III: 240, 346

The Mayflower Press, Plymouth. William Brendon & Son, Ltd.