

Morning Star and Catholic Messenger. NEW ORLEANS, SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 1878.

MINIATURE LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

It was the office of St. John to prepare the way for Christ, and before he was born into the world he began to live for the incarnate God. Even in the womb he knew the presence of Jesus and of Mary, and he leapt with joy at the glad coming of the Son of Man. In his youth he remained hidden, because he for whom he waited was hidden also. But before Christ's public life began, a Divine impulse led St. John into the desert; there with locusts for his food and haircloth on his skin, in silence and in prayer, he chastened his own soul. Then, as the words broke upon his solitude, he warned them to flee from the wrath to come, and gave them the baptism of penance, while they confessed their sins. At last he stood in the crowd one whom St. John did not know, till a voice within told him that it was his Lord.

With the baptism of St. John, Christ began His penance for the sins of His people, and St. John saw the Holy Ghost descend in bodily form upon Him. Then the Saint's work was done. He had but to point his own disciples to the Lamb, he had but to decrease as Christ increased. He saw all men leave him and go after Christ. 'I told you,' he said, 'that I am not the Christ. The friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled.'

St. John had been cast into the fortress of Machabera by a worthless tyrant whose crimes he had rebuked, and he was to remain there till he was beheaded at the will of a girl who danced before this wretched king. In this time of despair, if St. John could have known despair, some of his old disciples visited him. St. John did not speak to them of himself, but he sent them also to Christ, that they might see the proofs of his mission. Then the Eternal Truth pronounced the panegyric of the Saint who had lived and breathed for Him alone. 'Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist.'

ST. PETER CANISIUS.

Canisius was born A. D. 1521, at Nimegen in Germany; and in 1543 was the first of his countrymen to enter the Society of Jesus, some three years after its approval by Pope Paul III. Chosen by God to be a champion of the Faith, he was known from his youth for his fervour and purity, his abhorrence of heresy, and his obedience to his confessor. The Catholics of Cologne sent him, at the age of twenty-five, to Charles V., to solicit aid against their apostate archbishop, Hermann. Canisius succeeded in his task, and thenceforth for fifty years he labored unceasingly for the welfare of the Church. With amazing energy and prudence he revived the zeal of the Catholic princes and bishops, reformed the universities, and brought whole cities and provinces back to the Church. He defended the Faith in imperial diets against worldly statesmen, and in public conferences against the leaders of heresy. After assisting at the Council of Trent, he went as Apostolic Nuncio to promote the execution of its decrees in Germany, Bohemia, Poland, and Austria; and amidst these toils found time to compose learned controversial works, and a Catechism which has been for centuries a text-book of Christian doctrine. He was the first Provincial of the Society in Germany, and founded numerous colleges to be bulwarks of the Faith in Switzerland and in his native land. He died with every mark of sanctity at Friburg in 1597.

When Canisius was just beginning his apostolic career, the father who lived in the next room to his, in the Jesuit college at Vienna, was awakened one night by sounds coming from B. Peter's cell. On entering he found the zealous missionary on his knees, wringing his hands, his face all inflamed, while he was crying aloud to God for mercy on the poor Christians who were separated from the true Church. These secret prayers and tears explain his subsequent success.

ST. ROBERT OF MOLESME.

Robert was born in Champagne of a noble family, and at the age of fifteen entered the Order of St. Benedict. While still young he was made prior, and soon after a short time he was elected abbot. Finding that the monks shrank from the primitive rule of St. Benedict, he withdrew to Molesme with a few companions, and they built themselves cabins with the boughs of trees. But as they became richer they lost their early fervour, and Robert withdrew again to a desert place. The monks of Molesme then obtained an order from the Pope that Robert should return to them; as many, however, would not accept his reforms, he obtained leave from the Papal Legate to found a monastery in a wild spot called Citeaux, not far from Dijon. He took possession of it with twenty-one companions on St. Benedict's day, 1098, which day is regarded as the beginning of the great Cistercian Order. Again the monks of Molesme had recourse to the Pope; and at his bidding Robert at once resigned the pastoral staff of Citeaux, pleased his monks from their vows of obedience, and returned to Molesme, where he died in peace A. D. 1100, at the age of ninety-two. The Cistercian Order, founded by him, was carried on by St. Stephen Harding, and later by St. Bernard. Within a century it numbered eighteen hundred abbeys. The Congregation of La Trappe, founded in 1664, is one of the most vigorous branches of the Order.

In the early days of Molesme, the spot was so lonely and out of the way of the world that St. Robert often suffered actual want. One day when things were at their worst the brethren told him that there were no provisions. He urged them to trust in God, and bade them go to Troyes to buy food, remembering the words, 'Ye who have no money, come and buy.' They went in obedience, and were amazed at the effect produced by their appearance in the busy city. The bishop heard of them and sent them back with a wagon-load of bread and wine, and from that day they were never without a benefactor to supply them with food and clothing.

ST. PAULINUS OF NOLA.

Paulinus was of a family which boasted of a long line of ascetics, prelates, and

conans. He was educated with great care, and his genius and eloquence, in prose and verse, were the admiration of St. Jerome and St. Augustine. He had more than doubled his wealth by marriage, and was one of the foremost men of his time. Though he was the chosen friend of Saints, and had a great devotion to St. Felix of Nola, he was still only a catechumen, trying to serve two masters. But God drew him to Himself along the way of sorrows and trials. He received baptism, withdrew into Spain to be alone; and then, in concert with his holy wife, sold all their vast estates in various parts of the empire, and distributed their proceeds so prudently, that St. Jerome says East and West were filled with his alms. He was then ordained priest, and retired to Nola in Campania. There he rebuilt the church of St. Felix with great magnificence, and served it night and day, living a life of extreme abstinence and toil. In 409 he was chosen Bishop, and for more than thirty years so ruled as to be conspicuous in an age blessed with so many great and wise bishops. One who knew him well says he was meek as Moses, priestlike as Aaron, innocent as Samuel, tender as David, wise as Solomon, apostolic as Peter, loving as John, cautious as Thomas, keen-sighted as Stephen, fervent as Apollonius. He died A. D. 431.

St. Gregory the Great tells us that when the Vandals of Africa had made a decent on Campania, Paulinus spent all he had in relieving the distress of his people and redeeming them from slavery. At last there came a poor widow; her only son had been carried off by the son-in-law of the Vandal king. 'Such as I have give I thee,' said the Saint to her. 'We will go to Africa, and I will give myself for your son.' Having overborne her resistance, they went, and Paulinus was accepted in place of the widow's son, and employed as a gardener. After a time the king found out, by Divine interposition, that his son-in-law's slave was the great Bishop of Nola. He at once set him free, granting him also the freedom of all the townsmen of Nola who were in slavery.

ST. POTAMIANA, VIRGIN, MARTYR.

Towards the middle of the third century lived Potamiana, an Alexandrian slave. She had been brought up a Christian by her mother, Marcella, also a martyr, and the great Origen had been her instructor in the Faith. Owing to her remarkable beauty she was exposed to many dangers, and in particular her master, who was a heathen, endeavored by alternate threats and promises, to lead her from the path of Christian virtue. At last he was driven to such fury, that he accused her as a Christian to the governor of the city, telling him privately to spare her life if she would consent to sin.

The holy virgin was brought before the tribunal and instruments of torture were made ready. She was tormented in various ways, but she stood firm and immovable like a tower of strength. Thereupon the judge ordered a huge cauldron of pitch to be set on the furnace. When it was already boiling, he turned to Potamiana, and said, 'Go and submit, or else I will have you flung into this cauldron,' on her refusal he bade the attendants strip off her clothes and fling her in. She implored him to leave her clothed as she was, and instead to lower her down little by little into the cauldron, that he might see what patience Christ would give her. After three hours of agony the boiling pitch rose to her neck, and she gave up her pure soul to Christ, the Spouse of Virgins.

Devotion to the Virgin Saints is a great means of obtaining from God the gift of holy purity. When Potamiana was being led to torture, and the crowd attacked her with horrible insults, Basilides, the heathen officer in whose charge she was, showed her many marks of sympathy and respect. Potamiana promised that after her death she would obtain his salvation from our Lord in reward for his kindness. Three days after her death she appeared before him, placed a crown on his head, and told him he would ere long be with her in heaven. The prophecy was soon fulfilled. Basilides was baptized and died for the confession of the Faith.

ST. PETER, APOSTLE.

Peter was of Bethsaida in Galilee, and as he was fishing on the lake was called by our Lord to be one of His Apostles. He was poor and unlearned; but candid, eager and loving. In his heart, first of all, grew up the conviction, and from his lips came the confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and so our Lord chose him and fitted him to be the Rock of His Church, His Vicar on earth, the head and prince of His Apostles, the centre and very principle of the Church's oneness, the source of all spiritual powers, and the unerring teacher of His truth. All Scripture is alive with him; but after Pentecost he stands out in the full grandeur of his office. He fills the vacant apostolic throne; admits the Jews by thousands into the fold; opens it to the Gentiles in the person of Cornelius; founds, and for a time rules, the Church at Antioch, and sends Mark to found that of Alexandria.

Ten years after the Ascension he went to Rome, the centre of the majestic Roman Empire, where were gathered the glories and the wealth of the earth, and all the powers of evil. There he established his Chair, and for twenty-five years labored with St. Paul in building up the great Roman Church. He was crucified by order of Nero, and buried on the Vatican Hill. He wrote two Epistles, and suggested and approved the Gospel of St. Mark.

Two hundred and sixty years after St. Peter's martyrdom came the open triumph of the Church. Pope St. Sylvester, with bishops and clergy and the whole body of the faithful, went through Rome in procession to the Vatican Hill, singing the praises of God till the seven hills rang again. The first Christian emperor, laying aside his diadem and his robes of state, began to dig the foundations of St. Peter's Church. And now, on the site of that old church, stands the noblest temple ever raised by man. Beneath a towering canopy lie the great Apostles, in death as in life, undivided; and there is the Chair of St. Peter. All around rest the martyrs of Christ—Popes, Saints, Doctors from east and west; and high over all, the words: 'Thou art Peter, and on this Rock I will build my Church.' It is the threshold of the Apostles and the centre of the world.

ST. PAUL.

St. Paul was born at Taras, of Jewish

parents, and studied in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel. While still a young man he held the clothes of those who stoned the proto-martyr Stephen; and in his restless zeal he pressed on to Damascus, 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ.' But near Damascus a light from heaven struck him to the earth. He heard a voice which said, 'Why persecutest thou Me?' He saw the form of Him who had been crucified for his sins, and then for three days he saw nothing more. He awoke from his trance another man—a new creature in Jesus Christ. He left Damascus for a long retreat in Arabia, and then, at the call of God, he carried the Gospel to the uttermost limits of the world; and for years he lived and labored with no thought but the thought of Christ crucified; no desire but to spend and be spent for Him. He became the Apostle of the Gentiles, whom he had been taught to hate; and wished himself anathema for his own countrymen, who sought his life. Perils by land and sea could not damp his courage, nor toil and sufferings and age dull the tenderness of his heart. At last he gave blood for blood. In his youth he had imbibed the false zeal of the Pharisees at Jerusalem, the holy city of the former dispensation. With St. Peter he consecrated Rome, our holy city, by his martyrdom, and poured into its Church all his doctrine with all his blood.

St. Paul has left fourteen Epistles, which have been a fountain head of the Church's doctrine, the consolation and delight of her greatest Saints. His interior life, so far as records can tell it, lies open before us in these Divine writings, the life of one who had died forever to himself, and risen again in Jesus Christ. 'In what,' says St. Chrysostom, 'did this blessed one gain an advantage over the other Apostles? How comes it that he lives in all men's mouths throughout the world? Is it not through the virtue of his Epistles? Nor will his work cease while the race of man continues. Even now, like a most chivalrous knight, he stands in our midst, and takes captive every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

NATIONAL AIRS.

The French are nothing if not picturesque and sentimental, even in their politics. Rhetoric and epigram are the most successful weapons of their orators; an 'incident' or an epithet often has more effect than a solid argument; a sudden emotion, inspired by an impassioned appeal or a fervid patriotic maxim, sometimes produces in the staid halls of legislation a thrillingly dramatic scene. That so susceptible a people should be without a national anthem is a curious and suggestive fact; and the want of such a song, that all Frenchmen, of whatever political hue, may sing, is just now stirring up much debate and agitation in Paris. A trifling event has given rise to this demand for a patriotic hymn. The long-shunned and tabooed 'Marseillaise' was played by a regimental band at the Nantes Theatre, as a feature of a new drama that had been put upon the boards; whereon the band was prohibited by its commander from again attending the performance. This awoke the wrath of the extreme republicans everywhere. Was not, they said, the 'Marseillaise' a republican air, and was not France a republic? Hence has ensued a hot discussion, the radicals insisting that the magnificent war-song of Rouget de l'Isle should be solemnly declared the national anthem, and the other parties as warmly opposing it.

Certainly, the power of music to excite and exalt the human soul, to inspire it to intense feeling and bold, rash, uncontrollable action, never had a more striking exhibition than the history of this spirited *chanson* of the Revolution presents. Few Frenchmen can sing it without glowing with emotion, without a trembling in the voice, and tears rising to the eyes. Unhappily, the words which Rouget set to the ringing *Alatian* melody were, while really grand, and in keeping with the air, a party appeal; and ever since the days when the 'Marseillaise' was sung by a band of insurgents, marching on Paris to overthrow the established government, the song has been appropriated by the friends of revolution, and has been accepted by all classes as the musical symbol of overturning and disorder. It is a pity, for the 'Marseillaise' is certainly the most thrilling patriotic song that mortal ever created. Many a time has it rung out in Paris and in France, but, singularly enough, always, or almost always, as a defiance to the powers reigning at the Tuilleries.

It has greeted advancing regiments from behind barricades; it has been muttered, with a sort of religious solemnity, and with the effect of a charmed oath, in secret convalescent camps; now and then it has burst out at midnight, from the throats of half-drunken bands of blue-bloated sons of toil in quiet streets, to die away before approaching minions of authority. Three kings and two emperors have forbidden it on pain of heavy punishment; the sounds of its war notes have caused many a timid heart to beat fast, not with patriotic ardor, but with fear. Once, and once only, has a French sovereign beard, with pride and approval, this most fervid of all national airs. One night, on the very eve of the Franco-Prussian War, the third Napoleon held a grand reception at St. Cloud. The historic palace was crowded with glittering officers; and on a sudden, as if by inspiration, a band of the Imperial Guard struck up the long-unheard, but ever-familiar strains. At that solemn moment, there was or could be no frown for the strophe, or even the fiery words, of Rouget de l'Isle. It is not likely that even the French Republic, being conservative and half aristocratic, will adopt the 'Marseillaise' as the official national anthem; and if not that, the French may well be bewildered what to choose. The perplexity arises not from the want but the multitude of 'eligible' airs. Only less heart-stirring than the 'Marseillaise' is 'Partant pour la Syrie,' the composition of Queen Hortense; but that was the filially adopted air of the now defunct Second Empire. 'Vive Henri Quatre!' is beautiful, but Bourbon; 'Le Complainte de Malbrock' is full of jingle and sparkle, but is, after all, a burlesque—a sort of French 'Yankee Doodle.' It may be that, as an English writer suggests, a new national song may be created, with Victor Hugo as its poet and Gounod as its composer. But national airs are born, not made; and such an experiment, even though the great geniuses of these two are called into service, would not promise much success.

Follow the perfections of your enemies, rather than the errors of your friends.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

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