

THE DAUGHTERS OF O.L.S.H.
MASCOT

FATHER JULES CHEVALIER, M.S.C.

Founder of

THE SOCIETY OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART

and of

THE CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART

by

Father Charles Piperon
(one of his first companions)



Fr. Jules Chevalier, M.S.C.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!

This translation
of the life of
"our venerated and beloved Father"
is offered to all his spiritual children
TO COMMEMORATE
THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF HIS DEATH

21st October, 1957.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Convent,
Kensington,
SYDNEY

APPROBATION OF THE SUPERIORS OF THE CONGREGATION

The complete and detailed life of Father Chevalier will appear in due course. Let us hope that this will be seen. In the meantime, this brief biography will satisfy the legitimate curiosity of the many who are asking that such a life be written.

It is the work of one of the first companions of the Founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Father Charles Piperon, who knew Father Chevalier intimately, and who was both a witness of, and a participant in the origin and early development of the Congregation.

Into these pages, the author has put all his deep filial affection for him whom he so rightly calls "our venerated and beloved Father", together with his whole apostolic soul so desirous of seeing spread everywhere the two great devotions of the present time, devotions of which Father Chevalier was such an ardent propagator: the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

We express the wish that this biographical notice may everywhere receive a warm welcome. It will do great good to those who will read it.

Paris, 12th April.

Feast of Saint Jules.

ARTHUR LANCIN.

Imprimi Potest.

Romae, die 28 aprilis, 1912.

E MEYER

Sup. Generalis.

CHAPTER 1.

The whole life of the venerated Founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart can be summed up in the motto he has left: "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!"

Precious heritage! It recalls to all his children the life their venerated Founder lived and, at the same time, teaches them their chief duty as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. "All for the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus!" This is the end and aim of his Congregation. In founding this Congregation, Father Chevalier had no other ideal than that of forming apostles consumed with the desire of making ever better known the ineffable treasures of mercy and love which this Divine Heart contains; apostles filled with zeal to inspire souls with the most ardent love for Him Who so loved them as to deliver Himself unreservedly for their salvation.

This sublime ideal inspired all his works and was to strengthen and sustain his ardent longing to respond to Our Lord's desire of revealing to the world the devotion to His Adorable Heart.

Following the example of their venerated Founder, may his disciples have but one desire, one motive in all their works: the desire and the motive of immolating themselves unreservedly that the Heart of Jesus may be everywhere and always loved and glorified. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!

Father Chevalier was born in the diocese of Tours. His father, Charles Chevalier, a baker by trade, lived at Richelieu near the wheat market, at the corner of the Rue de Cygne and the Rue de Loudun. His wife, Louise Ory, shared his daily labour. They were very poor and, as the father's hard work barely produced enough to cover the necessary expenses of each day, his wife tried to lighten the cost of house-keeping by buying fruit and vegetables which she afterwards sold with some little profit. Each morning found her seated behind her stall in the market-place. Louise Ory was known and esteemed by all the people of Richelieu who praised her courage, ability and good humour. The record of their marriage appears in the parish register on 11th January, 1811.

Thirteen years later, on 15th March, 1824, a child was born. Two days later he received Baptism and was named Jean Jules.

His father, a working man without education and knowing nothing of life but its rude labours and the privations of poverty, gave a somewhat chill welcome to the new-born child. He already felt his health failing and saw in the new-comer only one more burden added to his daily sufferings. Poor father! How could he form a just idea of the joys and glories of fatherhood when he did not know the elementary practices of the Christian life and did not place his trust in God. For a man of faith, the child is a gift from heaven confided to his care. He knows that divine

Providence watches over him with solicitude because It destines him for the glory and happiness of Heaven, and so he accepts his laborious task with Christian courage.

Little Jules, as he was called, quite innocently became a source of dissension between his parents. One day, in a more bitter frame of mind than usual, the father went to the market-place, where his wife was calmly selling her vegetables to her numerous customers. There, in angry and cutting words, he reproached her for neglecting him and lavishing her cares upon her child. The poor mother, confused and humiliated, could not repress her emotion. She wept bitterly and then in a moment of desperation, took the child who was lying peacefully asleep in a basket and, pressing him to her heart, ran to the church nearby, hoping thus to end this painful scene. Approaching the statue of the Mother of God, she hurriedly placed the baby at her feet, saying: "Take him, my good Mother. If he is always to cause me as much pain as he has today, you can have him and do what you like with him. I leave him to you." This was her only prayer. She went away leaving her child under the care of the Queen of Heaven, his true Mother.

Soon, becoming calmer, and distressed at what she had done, she returned to the Church. Little Jules, unconscious of all that had happened, was smiling up at the Madonna who seemed to be looking tenderly down at him. The mother took up her child again, and went home consoled and resigned.

One of the witnesses of the scene testifies that from that moment Jules loved Our Lady's statue with an unusual affection. From the time he learnt to pray he would often be seen kneeling before it, devoutly reciting the Rosary or other prayers.

From his earliest years Jules manifested a genuine love for religious ceremonies. It was a real joy for him when the Parish Priest admitted him to the choir - a memorable event for this child of seven or eight - and it made on his youthful mind a deep and lasting impression. When, some time later, he was allowed to serve Mass and to assist at the altar, his happiness was complete.

In these duties and likewise at his studies, Jules ever showed himself a model. His precocious intelligence, his zeal for the sacred functions, and his edifying conduct all betokened a vocation for the priesthood. The Abbé Bourbon, then Parish Priest, was convinced of it. Besides, the child himself often manifested his desire for the priesthood, but the good priest, considering the poverty of the Chevalier family, did not think it possible for his altar-boy to realise his aspirations. Jules was bound as an apprentice to a shoemaker in the town, a kind family friend who allowed him to serve Mass every day. This was a great consolation for the boy who, though drawn by a divine call, saw all his hopes gradually vanishing.

This trial lasted four long years, after which time, the Divine Worker of Nazareth created a favourable opportunity for withdrawing from his humble workshop, this fervent young man who was destined by His Divine mercy to

become the apostle of His Sacred Heart. By an apparently accidental but providential circumstance, his father moved to Vatan, a small town in the diocese of Bourges close to Issoudun. There the young shoemaker found in the Abbe Darnault, Dean of that parish, a protector and devoted father. The good priest soon recognised the genuine qualities and manifest vocation to the priesthood of his new parishioner. He made him begin his studies in Latin and procured his admission to the Preparatory Seminary of Saint Gautier.

Jules Chevalier was then in his 17th year, an age when most students have completed the course of studies he was about to begin.

It is easy to understand the difficulties of the new student, this tall young man of almost 18, sitting in class with children of 12 or 13 who were better instructed in most subjects and had little regard for his feelings. Besides, since he had left the primary school he had forgotten much, and had scarcely exercised his mental faculties at all. These beginnings were therefore extremely difficult and he endured many weary hours. Fortunately, Jules Chevalier was endowed with an energetic nature and had a strong will, made yet stronger by prayer. He was certain that God destined him for the priesthood and nothing could shake his resolution to answer the Divine call. Four years later, in 1846, his superiors found him sufficiently prepared to undertake the studies of the Major Seminary. Up to that time, Jules Chevalier had displayed no extraordinary qualities. His fellow-students observed that he was regular, punctual, industrious and pious, but they saw no hint whatever of his future greatness.

During the last year of his stay at St. Gauthier, a serious accident, occasioned by an imprudence, and one which without a special protection, would have cost him his life, was the means employed by Divine Mercy to raise him to greater perfection.¹.

1. Footnote:

Father Chevalier wrote an account of this accident and it was published in his "Histoire religieuse d'Issoudun", (page 406). However, he omitted certain important details. We heard him relate this incident with all its remarkable circumstances and we were deeply moved by it. From that day the life of the young seminarist took a new orientation. He dated his conversion from this event, and he thanked Our Blessed Lady for the life which she had preserved and for the light which filled his soul.

The accident referred to was a fall from a cliff. The body was recovered, apparently dead, and word to that effect was sent to the Seminary. The "remains" were then brought back in a carriage. As the carriage approached the Seminary, the Rector, who had assembled the seminarists, spoke to them of the sad accident, and of the need of being prepared at all times to face death. Then he said, "We will now go out and form a guard of honour to receive our poor brother's remains." As the procession filed out, Jules, who had suddenly and miraculously recovered, put his head out of the carriage window and said, "I'm not dead, Father."

Under the action of divine grace, with which his soul was inundated from this time onwards, he viewed the priesthood in a new light. He understood more clearly the sublime virtues which it exacted and he resolved to acquire them at the cost of even the greatest sacrifices.

In these happy dispositions he entered the Seminary. We can only surmise what must have been the progress of such a soul, who never permitted himself to swerve from his generous resolutions. From the beginning, he rivalled in fervour even the most ardent of the seminarists. We could record here many edifying instances and acts of the highest virtue if space were not so limited. But virtue alone is not sufficient for a priest; he needs knowledge too, and without this his sacred ministry might be the occasion of ruin to himself as well as to others. Our Lord has said plainly: "If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit."

Deeply convinced of this truth, the Abbé Chevalier showed for the study of the sacred sciences the same ardour and zeal as he had for the acquirement of virtue. If, in the beginning, his professors did not find in him the brilliant qualities which give promise of a remarkably successful future, if even, as was said, they entertained doubts as to the ability of their new student, their fears were quickly dispelled. He was soon ranked amongst the most promising. His persistent persevering application brought to light the latent resources of his intellect. During his long career and even to his extreme old age, in spite of the labours of the apostolate, the innumerable cares of his new-born Congregation and the heavy duties of his parish, he always gave his rare moments of leisure to serious study. Evidence of this may be seen in the number of the works which he published. Nevertheless besides these, he left numerous unpublished writings, which were composed either for private use or in connection with his work. Others, I readily admit, have been blessed with a keener intellect, or have acquired deeper or more varied knowledge, but few men have accomplished a greater amount of work than did Father Chevalier. His prodigious activity, his incessant labours carried out in a spirit of faith, and his ardent zeal for the triumph of Holy Church and the salvation of souls reveal to us the secret of his success. He had in particular a great love for the Heart of Jesus and had consecrated himself unreservedly to the task of making It known and loved. All his works, all his enterprises, his unending trials, his long and cruel sufferings tended to this sublime end. That is why he has reaped the abundant blessings promised to the apostles of the Sacred Heart.

He commenced this apostolate even in the Seminary. More than once, when recreation or walks provided a favourable opportunity, we have listened to his burning words as he spoke to his intimate friends of the ineffable treasures of love and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Then we felt his ardent desire of pouring into our souls the overflow of the fire of his. What happy moments were these! After more than sixty years, their remembrance stirs my soul to its depths; but it also arouses a bitter regret that I have borne so little fruit.

Now the question arises. In the seminary, did Father Chevalier know

God's designs regarding the Congregation of which he was soon to become the Founder? We think he did. The motives on which we base this conviction leave us no room for doubt.

Many times during the three years we spent together in the Seminary we had the happiness of hearing in the company of several of his intimate friends, his confidences on this subject. During these conversations in which there were no secrets, he spoke of Issoudun, which from a religious point of view, was so neglected. He was as convinced as if he had already seen the foundation, that before many years there would be a house of missionaries there.

Far from taking these outpourings seriously, we thought only that our confrere was making use of the recreation to give free rein to his imagination. To our objection and our smiles of incredulity, he would answer good-humouredly, "You will see it." And his profound gaze and the play of his features seemed to add, "Yes, what I say is the truth."

Yes, indeed, it was true. When we consider how his words were realised despite apparently insurmountable obstacles, despite the insufficiency of the instruments and the means we cannot doubt but that he received from Heaven special promises to guide him in his mission. We are forced to say, as others have said before us, "The finger of God is here. His powerful Hand has worked these wonders."

Meanwhile, Father Chevalier completed his studies. He was ordained priest of 14th June, 1851. His dispositions at this solemn moment, which realised the aspirations of his whole life, can best be imagined. We will not try to describe them. Long since had the seminarist offered himself without reserve to the service of God. On this day the holocaust was consummated. He was a priest forever Henceforth there could be no limits to his gift of self to God and to souls.

But what was this young priest to do now? Intimately convinced as he was of God's designs, was he to set about realising them immediately? Not yet. For, though he knew the way he was to take, he did not yet know the moment chosen by Divine Providence for him to set out upon it. He would wait in obedience and peace. He would follow the common way, and keep his place among the secular clergy.

First, he was appointed curate in the small parish of Yvoy-le-Pre, in the district of Sancerre, but he was to stay only a few months. Chatillon-sur-Indre needed a prudent and zealous priest for work in the parish, for the parish priest was ill and unable to sustain the fatigues of his sacred ministry. Father Chevalier was called to this post of confidence. He remained there eighteen months until the death of the venerated pastor. Meantime, the Dean of Aubigny-sur-Nere - in the district of Sancerre - a priest of great virtue and zeal, but worn out by his laborious ministry, was no longer able to carry his heavy burden. The Diocesan authorities, having made experience at Chatillon of Father Chevalier's splendid qualities, transferred him to this new parish, which

was ranked among the best of the diocese. There, as at Chatillon, the fervour and untiring zeal of the new curate won the esteem of the parishioners as well as the grateful affection of the Parish Priest, whom he regarded with filial affection. He rendered him all the services which a devoted son could render his father. He assisted him in his last hour and lavished upon him all the help and consolation possible in this supreme trial.

It was a new sorrow for Father Chevalier to have to say farewell to these good people. All regretted his departure as they had mourned the death of their beloved parish priest.

What new field of labour was to be entrusted to the zealous apostle? Quite unconcerned, because convinced that wherever he was he would find good to do and souls to save, he waited for his superiors to indicate God's holy will. After a short time, a letter from the Archbishop of Bourges notified him of his new destination. Contrary to all expectation, it appointed him curate of Issoudun.

Issoudun! Was this not for him the true promised land where he was to found the works of which Divine Goodness had given him foreknowledge in his seminary days? Had the hour ordained by Providence come at last? Could he henceforth walk with assurance in the way which had been shown him? Such questions must have filled his mind. But his first act was a prayer of thanksgiving. Prostrate before the Infinite Majesty, he thanked the Heart of Jesus in a holy transport of love.

On 15th October, 1854, he arrived at Issoudun. He was never to leave. He was then thirty years of age and had spent three years and four months in parochial duties as curate.

CHAPTER 2

Issoudun, the old capital of Bas-Berry had seen its days of prosperity and glory. This is evident from its history. Towards the end of the 18th century, the ancient provinces of France were divided into departments and Issoudun became the chief town of a district (a small section of a department). This was a set-back from which it did not recover. When Father Chevalier was sent there as curate, in 1854, the now modernised town, with its suburbs and four large villages a good distance apart, formed only one parish. A single church, that of St. Cyr, former collegiate church of that name, had escaped the general ruin. For three of four centuries, it had remained unfinished. To this incomplete building, with its rich style of architecture, there was now added a large, shapeless construction, more like a barn than a church. This was called the parish

church, since, for a long time, certain parish services were held there. The collegiate church was reserved for solemn functions and was called the choir. This odd assembly of two such dissimilar buildings was the sole architectural treasure of Issoudun, which, before the revolutionary destruction had been noted for its fine churches. And this destruction was but an external symbol of the ravages produced in souls by the pernicious principles of the 18th century and, above all, by the frightful scandals of the Revolution. Up to that time, though the middle classes, imbued with the spirit of Voltaire, had abandoned the practice of religion, the great majority of the working class and the vine-growers had remained faithful. But by 1854 it was not so. In this populous parish, the number of men who regularly sanctified the Sunday was probably less than thirty.

However, in the midst of this general defection, there were some hundreds of faithful women, belonging to all classes of society. By the mercy of the Heart of Jesus and under the protection of His Immaculate Mother, they formed, in this forsaken parish, a leaven of resurrection and life, from which would arise a new generation. Through them religious practices and works of piety were preserved. By their heroic resistance to the spirit of evil and by their courageous perseverance in the practice of virtue, they made it possible to restore Christian life to families.

Such then was the field which Divine Providence confided to the zeal of Father Chevalier - a field which he was to cultivate with untiring devotedness for more than half a century. When he arrived at Issoudun in 1854, Canon Crozet was Archpriest. He was virtuous and zealous; loved and esteemed alike by his superiors, his confreres and the faithful. Unfortunately, his weak state of health made it impossible for him to continue his ministry. He was obliged to confide it to his curates who were already overburdened in the extreme, for it is evident that this scattered parish was too extensive a field for two young priests.

Father Chevalier found at Issoudun, one of his companions of the seminary at Bourges, Father Maugenest, with whom he had contracted a close friendship. They had the same zeal for souls, the same desires of priestly holiness, and now they seemed destined to share the same work and live a common life. When, in their seminary days, Father Chevalier spoke of his projects for the future, and his hopes of one day founding a house of missionaries at Issoudun, the Abbe Maugenest had been strongly attracted by the idea and evinced his desire to share in the work. This formed a bond of union between them.

Father Maugenest had always been a model seminarist. His remarkable talents and his application to study made Father Chevalier consider that he would be a valuable assistant. But Father Maugenest was not left to complete his studies at Bourges. His father, a doctor, wishing his son to develop his faculties to the full, sent him on to the seminary of St. Sulpice at Paris. So the two friends were separated, but not without deep regret, especially on the part of Father Chevalier, who had centered such high hopes in his confrere. At St. Sulpice, Pere Maugenest was a

great success. Having finished his studies he was ordained and returned home. Cardinal Dupont, Archbishop of Bourges, appointed him curate at Issoudun. He had occupied this post for about three months when Father Chevalier came to share his ministry.

We can imagine the sentiments of these two friends at their first interview. They had been separated for nearly four years, and strange as it may seem, they had never written to each other despite the warm affection which united them. And now, contrary to all expectation and without the least human intervention, they found themselves at Issoudun, living under the same roof and devoted to the same work. "The first sentiment of each of us," said Father Chevalier, "was one of lively gratitude." We may be sure it was. This reunion seemed to them so providential and, though they did not yet open their minds to each other, they offered silent thanksgiving to the Heart of Jesus. The meeting naturally quickened the aspirations of the seminary days, but, out of an over-discreet reserve, neither dared question the other. Father Chevalier prayed fervently about the matter for several weeks, then at length sought his friend, recalled their previous interviews and asked him if he were still in the same dispositions.

Father Maugenest moved almost to tears declared that he had not changed since their happy seminary days. He added, "If the Society of Missionaries that we have so often talked about, is part of God's design, I shall be the first to enter it, happy to consecrate myself unreservedly to the salvation of souls." At these words, Father Chevalier penetrated with gratitude thanked God from the depths of his heart. He had found his friend still in the dispositions he desired; henceforth he could open his heart to him.

The interview lasted a long time: the two friends had so much to say to each other. They spoke of the past with its holy and consoling memories, the projects and labours of the present, their plans for the future, yet, when they had discussed all these, they still felt that they had said nothing. This first outpouring of two souls, united in a deep and pure affection, was but a prelude to the serious questions they had yet to study together.

First and foremost, it was necessary to know, beyond all doubt, the will of God with regard to the Society of Missionaries which they proposed to establish. For man alone, even though he be endowed with the most brilliant qualities, can do nothing towards such ends unless God's all-powerful Arm upholds and blesses the work. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." (Ps. CXXVI).

Father Chevalier and his confrere were convinced of this. And so, despite the interior voice which urged them and the light which flooded their souls, they sought an unmistakable exterior sign which would protect them from all danger of illusion. This sign they resolved to ask through the intercession of Our Blessed Lady. It was then the second half of November, near the eve of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate

Conception. The entire world, bishops, priests and faithful, at the request of Pope Pius IX, was addressing fervent prayers to Heaven. The time seemed most opportune, truly unique, and so the two curates resolved to begin a novena which would end on the 8th December.

The holy Archpriest, who was well acquainted with the projects of his curates, and took a keen interest in them, was invited to join in the novena. This he gladly promised to do.

But what sign should they ask as an indication of God's Will? They were both entirely devoid of earthly possessions and had no idea where they would find the indispensable funds for even the beginning of the work. However, they were animated by a lively faith and had full confidence in the maternal goodness of Mary. They therefore asked her, as the first fruit of the glory bestowed on her by the proclamation of the dogma of her Immaculate Conception, to procure for them the necessary funds for their foundation. They decided that, if their prayers were heard, they would know by this sign that their inspiration had come from God and so was in conformity with His Holy Will. In the event of this sign, they promised to consecrate their work to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to take the glorious title of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and to do all in their power to express devotion to the Sacred Heart among the faithful. In addition, they promised to cause their Immaculate Mother to be honoured and loved in a special manner.

The novena was made with great fervour and on the ninth day (8th December, 1854) Mary gave the desired response. Let us allow Father Chevalier to relate the event himself. This brief account is taken from his notes. "The Mass was scarcely finished when a gentleman⁽ⁱ⁾ from Issoudun asked to speak to us. He told us that a benefactor who was a stranger in the town wished to give 20,000 francs to establish a good work in Berry - preferably a missionary work - and that, if we wished it, this sum would be put at our disposal. This was subsequently done."

In his transports of gratitude, he forgets to state how this unexpected event was an answer to his prayer, and how this important sum of money placed at his disposal gave him an assurance of the will of God. Let us explain. Their first material need was a small portion of land and a house to shelter the little Community. Now, at the very hour when the final and most fervent prayer of the novena was ascending towards her throne, the Most Holy Virgin had sent them the promise of the sum necessary to obtain both. This remarkable response on the part of Mary seemed to show clearly how pleasing the work was to her Maternal Heart, how pleasing to her Divine Son. It appeared that she herself wished to lay the foundation of the new congregation, specially devoted to the Heart of Jesus.

(i) This "gentleman from Issoudun", M. Petit, by name, was himself no stranger to the Archpriest and his curates. He had great esteem for their virtues and devotedness and rendered them every service in his power. In this instance, all unknown to himself, he was the messenger of the Queen of Heaven. His son, who was then a young solicitor at Issoudun, inherited his father's devotedness to the newly born Congregation. He was ever a faithful friend and prudent counsellor.

On the 8th December, 1854, the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was virtually founded. Henceforth the anniversary of this memorable day would be celebrated with great solemnity in all the houses of the Society.

The work had taken its first definite step. Now, the holy Founder could proceed with assurance along the way which had been shown him in the seminary. Mary's response shed clear light on this way. The Heart of Jesus wished the foundation and His Divine Mother declared herself its powerful protectress. What more could be desired?

A few months later, on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, 1855, the two priests took possession of the house prepared by the solicitude of their Heavenly Protectress. Here, under her watchful care, they were about to commence the novitiate of their new life. They entered it with great joy and gratitude. The poverty of Bethlehem, the destitution of the stable, were its sole adornments - an alluring attraction for apostolic souls whose only desire was to reproduce in themselves the life of Jesus Christ, King of the poor, their only ambition to devote themselves, as He did, to the salvation of their brethren.

Their first care was to prepare in the ramshackle old house, one room decent enough in which to celebrate the Adorable Sacrifice for the faithful. In a few months the work was finished. It was not without grace, this modest chapel, whose only adornment was the immaculate whiteness of its walls. The Abbe Caillaud, Vicar-General to Cardinal Dupont, Archbishop of Bourges, came to bless it. This was on the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, and - a providential coincidence - this same day, the young apostles, in the name of His Eminence, the Cardinal, were officially named Missionaries of the Sacred Heart - a further testimony of the maternal interest taken by the Mother of God in the new Congregation.

CHAPTER 3

Every society, no matter what its nature or importance, requires a set of Rules. No productiveness or durability would be possible for an association if each member followed his own will.

The two young Missionaries, formed to the virtues of the priestly state by the disciples of M. Olier, had preserved a deep affection for the Seminary traditions. They decided that they could not do better than continue, for the time being, the practice of the Seminary Rule, whilst at the same time, reserving to themselves the right of modifying certain points, according as experience or the lights given by the Holy Spirit would indicate the necessity. This was a wise step which made it possible for the Founder to prepare, at leisure, the Rules and Constitutions of the Congregation. For more than ten years the Congregation was to remain in this embryonic state. During that time the subjects were not bound by any vow or special promise. They were free to bind themselves by private vow if they felt the attraction to do so. Nothing more was exacted of new-comers than a generous will, the faithful observance of the common rule and obedience to the superiors. However, from the very beginning, Father Chevalier had conceived his Congregation such as we see it today, with religious vows and the various works indicated in the Constitutions. His first confreres never had the least doubt on this subject. He himself also affirms, in the notes on the Congregation, that such was his original idea, as it was also of his first companion.

If as yet, they could not make the vows of religion they, nevertheless, resolved to bind themselves irrevocably to God by private vows. On⁽¹⁾ Christmas Day, 1856, the little Community composed of three members went to the Chapel in the evening and, prostrate before the Crib, Father Chevalier and Father Maugenest pronounced the perpetual vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, to which they added a fourth - that of stability in their vocation. Their confrere, who had joined them scarcely six months previously, was the only witness of this touching consecration of his seniors.

The reputation of the new missionaries was even now beginning to spread. They were appreciated, not only for their virtues and zeal, but also for their apostolic eloquence. Before long they were invited to evangelise the neighbouring parishes.

Father Maugenest was a remarkable preacher. When he made his appearance, his tall, slender figure, his modest, yet self-possessed bearing, his humble, yet steady gaze immediately won the confidence of the audience. But when he began his sermon, his powerful voice, his fluency, his lively yet imaginative style, which he knew how to adapt to the simple and the ignorant, and his clear and sound teaching won him assured success. If one adds to these natural qualities, a humble abnegation and a lively faith which looked to God's grace for the success of his ministry and asked for it with insistence in prayer, we can easily realise that Father Founder's hopes for the future of his work were centered in Father Maugenest. More-

(1) The third member was Father Piperon, the writer of this book.

over, Father Maugenest loved his vocation and generously strove to acquire the virtues it exacted.

Father Chevalier's discourses were notable in a different way. If he lacked the literary brilliance so much admired in his young confrere, if his delivery was faulty on more than one point and if he sometimes neglected rules of rhetoric, these defects were adequately compensated for by passages of true Christian eloquence. Then it was that the apostle, carried out of himself, captivated his hearers and fired them with a little of his own ardour. Then it was that his voice, ordinarily clear, precise and well modulated though forceful, assumed accents so touching that the most insensible could not resist. In the fervour of his zeal, he painted in the most vivid colours, the terrible effects of Divine Justice, the frightful ravages and black ingratitude of sin, the beauty of virtue and especially the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus and the grandeur of the August Virgin Mary. Many times in those happy bygone days we have heard him. Fifty years have elapsed since then, and the remembrance - I almost said the impression - is still living.

Father Chevalier had a great respect for the word of God, and he insisted that sermons should be prepared with great care. In this he himself gave the example. That he might never be taken by surprise, he set to work right from the beginning to compose discourses on all subjects on which a missionary might be called upon to treat. For years, in spite of the almost overwhelming duties that absorbed his care, he devoted all his free time to this work. His written sermons contained matter for more than five large volumes - in all, nearly a thousand different instructions. Certainly, all these were not complete and perfect works. Often they were mere sketches, more or less developed according to circumstances. However, taken together with a considerable number of other writings, the collection gives evidence of the constant and tireless labour of our venerated Father. Assuredly, he did not bury any of the talents confided to him. Father, by persistent work, even to the closing days of his long career, he "traded much". He was, indeed, the "good and faithful servant".

The two first years of the little Congregation passed rapidly in an atmosphere of work and prayer and great fraternal charity. With the Psalmist, we loved to sing: "Oh, how good and sweet it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Neither the privations of poverty nor the difficulties of the moment could alter the peace which we then enjoyed.

But, before long, there was to fall upon us a heavy trial - heavy, above all, for our beloved Father. It came suddenly and from a quarter no one would have expected. In Advent, 1857, Father Maugenest preached a very successful mission in St. Peter's Parish at Bourges. This was a great consolation for Father Chevalier who felt his hopes once more confirmed. Alas! his joy was of short duration. At the close of the mission, Father Maugenest wrote that, at the Cardinal Archbishop's orders, he was going to Paris to make a retreat at the Seminary of St. Sulpice, and that he would be absent for some weeks. He apologised for not giving a fuller explanation, and said he had promised the Cardinal to keep strict silence on the reason

of his prolonged stay in the capital.

When he read this letter with its evident reticence, Father Chevalier broke down. It was as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet.

"Whatever has happened?" asked his young confrere, greatly alarmed.

Father Chevalier simply handed him the letter and said, "Read this." Then controlling himself with an effort he added, "We must separate."

"Separate! Why?"

"His Eminence has just appointed Father Maugenest Archpriest of the Cathedral. It is evident that he does not wish us to continue our work. Next thing he will be giving each of us a post in the diocese."

This surmise was in part true. The Cardinal had indeed appointed Father Maugenest Archpriest of the Cathedral. The latter, of course, was greatly distressed, but when he objected to this appointment, the Cardinal said authoritatively, "I am your Archbishop, and as such, your superior; therefore you owe me obedience. Go to Paris and make a retreat at the Seminary. You will come out of it, I hope, entirely submissive to my will."

The day after he received the letter, Father Chevalier went to Bourges, hoping to persuade the Archbishop to alter his decision. A vain hope! After having listened to him with condescension, the Archbishop said, "If your work comes from God, the loss of one of its members will not prevent it from succeeding. If it be the work of man, the presence of this subject will not preserve it from ruin." In his written account of this interview, Father Chevalier concludes with these words, "God alone knows the distress of heart and the tears which this separation caused us." A more painful or disheartening trial could scarcely be imagined.

Father Chevalier returned the same day. Though his soul was crushed by the blow that had just been struck at his work, he did not permit himself to be discouraged. He was firmly convinced that God wanted the work and that He could make it succeed in spite of every obstacle. At the foot of the Tabernacle, he resolved to neglect nothing in order to insure its success.

But what a catastrophe!

The little tree had produced three branches; two had been vigorous and gave promise of yielding abundant fruit, the third was frail and weak and of little promise.* And now, a sudden windstorm had carried away the branch that gave the best promise. What could the future hold? The tree will languish for a few years but, rooted in the soil in which the Divine Gardener has planted it, it will not perish. Once more, Jesus will prove that in His all-powerful Hands and with His merciful grace, every instrument

* The humble Father Piperon here speaks of himself.

He deigns to use can contribute to the success of His work. Beyond all hope, the tree developed slowly but surely, and today its harvest of fruit calls forth our wondering admiration.

However, if Father Chevalier accepted with humble submission, the trial that the Heart of Jesus had sent him, he nevertheless suffered keenly. The separation from his dearest friend left a great void in his heart, and to gain strength under this trial he resolved to make a pilgrimage to St. Margaret Mary's tomb. This intention was carried out in the first weeks of 1853. To quote his own words he spent two days "in these holy places sanctified by the apparitions of Our Lord and perfumed by the devotion to His Sacred Heart." He returned with renewed courage, resolved to bear without faltering any new crosses it might please God to impose upon him. And they were not slow in coming.

About the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, of the same year, one of the curates of Issoudun - a former companion of the Seminary - who lacked neither talents nor ability, sought and obtained admission. Despite his brilliant qualities, this young priest was not able to support the yoke of the Rule, so easy to generous souls. Father Chevalier had to ask him to leave. The postulant was thereupon much offended and complained to the Cardinal Archbishop. To make excuse for his dismissal, he did not fear to disparage his confreres. In addition, to this, he declared that he could not live in a house where his life was daily endangered, since the little Chapel threatened to collapse at any moment, and no one could celebrate the Offices of the Church without fear of an accident. In the end, he so convinced the Cardinal of his sincerity that, without further enquiry, he forbade all ceremonies in the Chapel and ordered it to be closed within twenty-four hours.

There was great distress in the little Community and among the faithful. Father Chevalier was ignorant of the source of the blow which had struck him so unexpectedly and went at once to have an interview with the Cardinal. It was a Monday. The matter was fully cleared up and the postulant's subterfuges exposed. However, to reassure the alarmed people, the Cardinal stipulated that the necessary repairs should be made and a certificate of the architect, attesting that all danger of collapse was averted, should be sent to him. Four days later, the Cardinal received the required attestation and on the next day, Saturday, Father Chevalier was authorised to re-open the Chapel for the celebration of Mass. The interdict had not lasted six days. Three days had sufficed to repair the humble Chapel which, according to the detractor, was on the verge of ruin. The expenses incurred were in reality very slight, but for the little Community which could barely meet its daily needs, they were very heavy. The final result, however, was a happy one for from this moment the decision was made to commence, as soon as possible, the building of a Church which would be less unworthy of the Divine Majesty.

CHAPTER 4

After the work of founding the little Community, Father Chevalier's next anxiety was the evangelisation of the men. We have already spoken of the motive attracting him to Issoudun, namely, the neglected state of this vast parish with its population of more than twelve thousand.

A few facts ought to make us realise better than a long discourse the religious decay of the Capital of Bas-Berry, formerly so famous for its faith and zeal in the service of God. Sad to say, it had been profoundly shaken by the numerous and frightful apostasies during the revolutionary upheaval of 1793. Furthermore, on the restoration of Divine Worship, the diocesan authority could spare only one priest to care for the town and several country areas. What could be done by one priest, however zealous, to bring back to religious practices this great population which had been misled by numberless scandals? Above all, what could he do to instruct and form to virtue his scattered parishioners, who had for long years forgotten the way to the Church?

At Issoudun, in 1856, there was one man - we repeat it, only one man - who fulfilled his religious duties. He assisted at Mass on Sundays and Feast Days and made his Easter duty. More than once he told us this himself and the Parish Priest, Canon Crozat, confirmed his declaration. We can then judge the state of the parish in 1854, notwithstanding the progress that had been made since divine worship had been restored. But, as we have already stated, in the midst of the general indifference of the men, a good number of mothers of families and pious women in all classes of society kept up the practices of Christian life in the parish. They were as fervent as the men were indifferent and their love for Our Blessed Lady was singularly edifying.

Father Chevalier's ardent and completely apostolic soul prompted him to seek a remedy for the indifference of this parish. The evangelisation of the men was his dream. In order to realise it, he determined to unite them in groups where they might again learn the way back to the Church, to give them suitable instructions and to provide them with the advantage and the attraction of devotions to which they alone would be admitted. In a word, he would establish a Mass for Men.

The decision was made towards the end of 1856. Without delay, the Missionaries went out into the country to find men of good will. After many weeks of laborious journeys, visits and invitations, to which they were often accorded refusals more or less polite, they counted thirty serious promises. You will exclaim, "Thirty men to commence a work of this kind, in an important parish! What a disappointment!" Out Father Superior did not think so. He congratulated us on our good work and added, "We shall commence on Sunday."

On the following Sunday, the small battalion met at the Church and the Mass was celebrated for these thirty courageous men - all labourers or

farmers. They followed the ceremonies with a satisfactory degree of recollection and at the end the celebrant addressed to them a few words of thanks and encouragement. Then all joined in a short prayer.

As they made their way home, these good men were faced with a severe trial. Standing in the doorways of the street were groups of curious men and women - especially women, who watched them with sarcastic smiles or exchanged unpleasant remarks for them to hear. This was certainly a severe trial for these men still so weak in their religious convictions. How many men, courageous and strong in other matters, allow themselves in this to be vanquished by human respect, that tyrant of our soft and characterless societies! That day human respect itself was vanquished. Those thirty men went back joyfully to their homes, with the consciousness of having accomplished a great duty and the resolution to persevere.

The work for men had begun. And if today, in spite of the sad events of our time and the innumerable obstacles raised up by them, the parish of Issoudun possesses a considerable nucleus of practical men, it is due to the intelligent and persevering zeal of Father Chevalier and his devoted collaborators.

The second enterprise was the construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart. We have already mentioned the serious motives which induced Father Chevalier to begin this difficult work. When he took his resolution the Community was reduced to two members and they were in extreme poverty - or rather, extreme destitution. The Viscountess Du Quesne had, it is true, assured the Missionaries temporarily of an annual allowance of a thousand francs, and for this we preserve a sincere and undying gratitude - but what was this sum in face of our daily needs? What was more, the numbers of our Community had to increase if the work was not to perish even before its establishment, but an increase in number would mean a proportional decrease in the allowance for each one. Terrible and insoluble problem. Apart from this allowance, in spite of what mis-informed persons may have said to the contrary, we had nothing, absolutely nothing. But I am mistaken. We possessed the richest of all treasures - God's assurance: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Justice and all these things shall be added unto you." Father Chevalier relied on these words with an unshakable faith. This was his strength and the pledge of his success, for Providence is the foundation on which good works rest.

However, if the Father Superior was sustained by an absolute confidence, he did not want to be rash. He determined, first of all, to recommend his project to the Immaculate Virgin, the powerful Protectress of his Congregation; then to study the means of carrying it out. In all, he was resolved to hasten the work only in proportion to the help sent by Divine Providence. This was great wisdom.

Soon, he believed the hour had come to reveal his design to the faithful of Issoudun. He appealed to them to contribute according to their means and they responded well.

The very day after his announcement, a poor girl who by her constant work barely earned a living, came to him and said, "I am bringing you my contribution for the Church of the Sacred Heart. It is very little, but it's all I possess." She handed him a small, carefully-wrapped parcel. He opened it and five gold pieces of 20 francs each glittered before him.

"Where did you get this gold?" he asked.

"Father, it is what I have saved since I have been living at Issoudun. Yesterday I promised the Heart of Jesus I would bring it to you. Take it, I give it to you willingly."

Greatly touched, he took one of the five coins and folding the paper, said, "Keep the rest for your future needs, my child."

"No, Father," she persisted, "I have promised it all to the Heart of Jesus. I cannot keep any."

"But what if you lose your work or fall ill?"

"Father," she replied earnestly, "this money does not belong to me now, it is God's. I have given it all to Him and I won't take back one groat. And as for the future, I place my trust in Providence."

Divine Providence did not fail her. Eventually she was employed as companion to a highly respectable lady who, when dying, bequeathed her a modest allowance, sufficient to preserve her in the future, from all want.

This girl devoted herself unceasingly to the works of the Congregation and she became one of the best promoters of devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Having reached an extreme old age, she wished to see, as she fondly said, "her dear Church of the Sacred Heart." She came back to Issoudun after an absence of many long years to ask at the feet of her good Mother, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the grace of a holy death. When I reminded her of the humble beginning of our Congregation and of her generous offering for the construction of the Church, she said, "O Father, how wonderful God is in His works! Beg of Him that, though I am only a poor ignorant sinner, I too may contemplate Him in Paradise."

This was the first offering, or I should say, the first stone that Father Chevalier received for the building of his Church and his sole capital when the foundation stone was laid.

Lost in admiration at the faith and charity of this woman, he said to himself, "The others perhaps will give of their abundance, 'but she of her poverty has given all she possessed'" (St. Mark, XII, 44) He hesitated no longer. This heroic act seemed to him the best assurance of God's blessing on his enterprise. And, like the poor working-girl, he declared, "I place all my confidence in the adorable Providence of God."

In April, 1859, the first part of the general plan was commenced. On

the 15th June, 1860, the Missionaries were able to take possession of that portion of the building comprising the sanctuary and three first sections of the nave.

What is more remarkable still, sufficient resources had been supplied, in proportion to our needs, in such a manner that in the weeks which followed the blessing of this first part, we experienced the consolation of being able to hand to the contractors the first payment due to them. This was an encouragement to Father Chevalier to proceed with the work since Providence showed itself so bountiful. The whole building was completed by the end of three years (1864).

Now, where did these resources come from? From all countries. They crossed the seas, they passed over mountains to flow towards Issoudun.

What mysterious power attracted them to this town which, half a century before, was almost unknown to the rest of the world? This power cannot be attributed to the influence of Father Chevalier who, up to this time was perfectly unknown and whose name had scarcely gone beyond the confines of the parish. No, we must look higher. This power is none other than that of the Immaculate Virgin, the Protectress of the newly-born Congregation, who wished to make the new Church a centre of devotion to the Heart of Jesus and also to teach us that she is the ineffable Treasurer of this Divine Heart. Father Chevalier was only the instrument chosen to carry out her merciful designs. He was fully convinced of this fact and would have strongly reprimanded us had we attributed to him an influence which he did not possess.

His delicate sensibility on this point was extreme. We have, more than once, been greatly edified by it. May we be permitted to mention here one incident. He had invited a talented and very zealous religious to preach a solemn novena. On the concluding day, the preacher thought it permissible to pay a compliment in which he congratulated him on the great work accomplished by his zeal. Had it not been for the respect due to the house of God, the people would have loudly applauded. Wounded to the quick, Father Chevalier could scarcely contain his displeasure, and it would have taken very little to make him interrupt the preacher with a rebuke. His first words, on leaving the Church, were those of strongly-worded disapproval. "This priest has forgotten the respect due to the word of God. Never again will I invite him to preach here. His sermon has been a scandal. It is the Heart of Jesus Who has done all, by the intermediary of His Most Holy Mother; to Him alone belongs the glory."

Completely absorbed in the realisation of his holy design, Father Chevalier sought means of carrying it out. He remembered having read in the life of St. Margaret Mary, the desire of Our Lord to see distributed everywhere images of His Divine Heart, and the promise which He had made to bless the houses where this sacred image would be honoured. This was an inspiration. One day he said to me, "Dear Father, let us have confidence; here, it seems to me, is the way to overcome our difficulty. We will have a beautiful picture of the Sacred Heart printed and give a copy to everyone

who will make an offering towards the building of our Church. Through the circulation of these pictures, we shall propagate the knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart which is the very aim of our little Congregation, and I have great confidence that we shall receive abundant alms. Let us earnestly beg Our Lady to bless our project and help us to realise it."

The confidence of the venerated Father was not groundless for our Divine Mother had inspired her apostle. As soon as the picture was known, it was in great demand everywhere. One could only think that the angels at Mary's service employed themselves in propagating it. This then was Father Chevalier's secret, and the providential means employed by Mary for the success of her enterprise.

The young community developed with difficulty. Its members still lived under the Founder's provisional rule. Nevertheless new subjects did present themselves, but they withdrew after a time of trial, more or less prolonged. Some did not possess the necessary qualities, other doubted of the future of the Congregation or were discouraged in face of the unceasing difficulties of the first years. It must be admitted that if the provisional rule was not very rigorous, sacrifices were not lacking, hence it needed strong souls ardently desirous of walking in the footsteps of the Adorable Victim of Calvary.

However, the young Founder was full of hope and believed unfalteringly in the realisation of his generous designs. That the many and great works undertaken in these first days have persisted and developed is proof of the intensity of the spiritual life which he had known how to infuse into the little Community and of his own ardent zeal and untiring activity.

In 1860 he added another storey to the house which formerly consisted of a single floor and contained only four cells. These were so narrow, poor and inconvenient that there was no little merit in living in them. The new construction was wisely planned and provided twelve modest rooms, clean and very convenient in every way. Postulants could now present themselves for there was a place to receive them. This was an improvement, assuredly not a great one, but still one which brought comfort and joy. The poor are content with little.

Neither work, trials nor sufferings could make Father Chevalier forget the solemn promise made in 1854 to Mary Immaculate to honour her and have her honoured with special homage in the new Congregation. What special worship had Father Chevalier in mind? We will let him tell us.

"From the beginning of our work in 1855, we thought of giving a name to Mary to testify our gratitude and to express her power over the Heart of her Divine Son - a power of which she had given us so many proofs. We decided on the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart as being the best expression of what we had in mind. The more we studied this new title, the more fitting it appeared to us and the more it seemed in accord with solid theology." This, then, was the title under which henceforth our beloved Father and his children would render to the most holy Virgin the special

homage which he had promised her. It took him four years of fervent prayer, serious mediation and long study to set this new jewel in our Mother's crown of glory. Yes, four years had passed by - from 1855 to 1859 - before Father Chevalier made known to some of his confreres this new title. Let us try to understand its value for we will derive both profit and joy from it.

Let us consider what Father Chevalier proposed in thus naming Our Blessed Lady:

1. To thank and glorify God for having chosen Mary from amongst all creatures to form in her womb and of her most pure substance, the Adorable Heart of Jesus.
2. To honour in a particular manner the love, obedience and filial respect that Jesus nurtured in His Heart for His Most Holy Mother.
3. By a special title which included all others, to recognise the power which He has given her over His Divine Heart.
4. To implore the Holy Virgin to lead us herself to the Heart of her Son, to open to us the treasures of grace which It contains and to make us draw more abundantly from this Sacred Source.
5. By and with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, to make reparation for the outrages offered to the Sacred Heart, and to console Him in His sadness and bitterness by a more edifying life.
6. To confide to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart all difficult and hopeless cases in the spiritual and temporal order.

These are great things, the consideration of which made the illustrious Cardinal Lie, Archbishop of Poitiers, declare that the invocation, "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us" would be one of the finest ears in the sheaf of honour offered by our age to the Holy Mother of God. Praise and thanks be forever rendered to our divine Mother who guided her devoted servant and inspired him in the choice of this title.

In 1860 a very beautiful stained glass window representing Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was placed above the altar which was dedicated to her. Then in the years following, Father Chevalier had this representation printed. This picture had scarcely become known before there arose on all sides an urgent demand for it. Each day we received numerous letters in this strain: "Father, send to my address, as quickly as possible, 100 (or sometimes 500 or 1,000) pictures of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Everybody here wants one." At times the letters contained touching accounts of unexpected favours obtained through the intercession of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Other persons wrote begging to have their names inscribed in the Confraternity which they thought was established under this title.

Father Chevalier had, as yet, neither published nor even written any

thing about this devotion and already it was known and loved in the most distant countries. In a language more eloquent than words, the little picture spoke to souls of the marvellous power, the merciful goodness and loveliness of her who has not been named in vain the Conquerer of hearts (raptrix Cordium). It seemed that the angels themselves were eager to announce to the world the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Marvelling at all this and with hearts full of gratitude, Father Chevalier and his confreres would say to one another, "We see without any doubt, that our well-beloved Mother is pleased that we honour her ineffable power over the Heart of Jesus."

It became imperative that Father Chevalier should express in writing the meaning he attached to the invocation "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us". Hence one of our number was charged with doing this.* He drew up in a few pages that the Father had communicated to us and, with his approbation, made several copies of this document. This same father being in Puy-en-Valay, paid a visit to Father Ramiere, Director of the Apostleship of Prayer and the Messenger of the Sacred Heart. Seeing the Father take a great interest in the subject he offered him a small picture which was gladly accepted.

"Have you anything in writing, anything published on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart?" asked the Director eagerly.

"Up to the present, nothing has been printed, but I have with me a written copy a few pages in length." And opening his portfolio, the visitor presented the modest manuscript. Father Ramiere read it attentively and then said, "Let me have this for the Messenger. It will be read with interest."

"It is impossible, Father, I'm sorry to say. This is not mine, but I will make known your request to my superior and he himself will write to you about it."

When this request was made, Father Chevalier realised that he must not leave to others the care of this publication, so he hastened to compose a pamphlet: OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART, by Father Jules Chevalier, Missionary Apostolic of the Sacred Heart.

This was his first publication. It appeared in November, 1862, with the approbation and recommendation of the Archbishop of Bourges, Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne. More than forty Archbishops and Bishops in France and neighbouring countries to which this pamphlet was sent, approved of the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The Messenger of the Sacred Heart published it in the May edition, 1863, and at the same time displayed to all its subscribers the picture of our Mother. This was a great consolation for Father Chevalier, who saw thereby the realisation of his ardent desire to render to the Most Holy Virgin a special honour.

* Father Piperon himself.



*By and with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
we will glorify the Heart of Jesus
and will propagate, in accordance with our motto,
His worship and His Love.
We shall go to the Heart of Jesus through Mary.*

Father Chevalier.

CHAPTER 5

In July, 1858, the holy Founder made a pilgrimage to Louvesc to recommend all his projects to St. Francis Regis, the great missionary of Velay, Vivarais and Cevennes; then to La Salette for, as he wrote in his notes, he had "so much to ask for, so much to be thankful for." On his return, he wished to see the holy Cure of Ars to consult him on his work and to solicit his prayers. Although he was able to remain only a few hours at Ars, he had the happiness of securing a fairly long interview.

The holy Cure listened to him with particular interest and then, giving him his blessing, he said, "Heaven will bless your work, but only after many trials. Have courage and confidence. When will you arrive back at Issoudun?"

"On the 26th July, Father."

"Very well then, on the 26th July we shall commence a Novena. I will unite with you and your confreres and the Sacred Heart of Jesus will protect you."

A few days after his return, the papers announced the death of the Cure of Ars. On hearing this news, we said, "The holy Cure will continue in Heaven his novena for our work; he will be our protector."

Towards the end of August in the following year, 1860, Father Chevalier set out for Rome. He desired to obtain the Holy Father's blessing on his new Congregation. In a private audience - as he noted, it was on the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary - he explained in detail to Pius IX, the aim of his work and the plan on which he hoped to form his Congregation.

The Holy Father listened graciously and then replied, "I pray earnestly for the prosperity of your Congregation. I bless it with all my heart. I would like all priests to form part of it; increase and multiply. The only hope for the Church and for society rests in the Heart of Jesus. There alone is the cure of all our ills. Preach everywhere the devotion to this Divine Heart: It will be the salvation of the world. Make haste to establish yourselves. I shall be happy to give the Canonical approbation which is as yet lacking." This was eventually realised. In 1869, Pius IX gave the Decree of Praise. In 1874, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, he approved the Congregation and finally in 1877, he confirmed for ten years, the approbation of the Constitutions. His Holiness, Leo XIII gave the final approbation on 24th July, 1891.

This visit to the Eternal City was for the Founder and for his rising Congregation a source of abundant blessings. Besides receiving there special and necessary lights for the formation of his Congregation, he also found devoted protectors and enlightened advisors who rendered him great service.

Providence had secured this help for him in view of the numerous obstacles which he would meet on his way. He returned to Issoudun filled with consolation. Pius IX had encouraged and blessed his work; henceforth he could proceed with complete assurance; no difficulty could shake his energetic will. With new ardour he resumed the course of his work. His first care was the completion of the Church of the Sacred Heart which was finished in 1863 and consecrated on 2nd July of the following year.

All his life, Father Chevalier had a deep respect and affection for his confreres in the priesthood. Those who lived with him knew with what kindly cordiality he always welcomed brother priests. The isolation in which the greater number of the secular priests were forced to live made him fear for them. He opened his house and also his heart to each one. He would have liked to procure for all the blessings of a religious life accommodated to the exigencies of the parish ministry. This desire gave birth to the organisation known as the Secular Priests of the Sacred Heart, which was begun almost at the same time as the Congregation.* Priestly associations were increasing rapidly in France and Father Chevalier was in communication with the greater number of the directors. Towards the end of August, 1863, he held a sort of congress at Issoudun. His idea was to establish the basis of one single association under the patronage of the Sacred Heart. His ardent love for the Sacred Heart made him expect from this union a very great spiritual profit for all. If the result of this congress was not what he desired, at least it accomplished great good from the interchange of ideas and opinions. There was established a kind of wide federation of all the associations, with the Sacred Heart as the centre and link.

Meanwhile, in proportion to the spread of the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the accounts of favours received through her intercession became more numerous and requests for inscription in the Confraternity in her honour became more urgent. Now, no association of the kind was in existence. Father Chevalier had not yet thought of establishing one. In November, 1863, on going to arrange with the Archbishop the ceremonies for the consecration of the Church he, at the same time, gave him an account of the marvellous attraction of souls to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. This good prelate said: "Father, you ought to found an Association of prayer as soon as possible. Draw up the Statutes and send them to me as soon as possible. We shall approve and canonically establish this Association."

Contrary to his usual promptitude, Father Chevalier waited two long months before responding to the desires of his Archbishop. The decree of erection was signed on the following 29th January, but was not published until the beginning of April, 1864, - by the Archbishop himself. His Grace inscribed his name at the head of the Register of the Confraternity, and

- * In spite of the troubles of the present time, this work still flourishes, to the great profit of its members. Since the time of its origin, nearly 1,200 priests have been enrolled under the banner of the Sacred Heart.

expressed the wish that his name would be followed by a hundred thousand others. On July 2nd, after the consecration of the Church, we presented him with the Register. It already contained more than 50,000 names and at the end of that same year, the hundred thousand desired by the Archbishop was more than surpassed. Today, after 48 years, the number inscribed at Issoudun counts almost 20 million. This number does not include the members of the many individual Confraternities spread over the world.

May Our Lady of the Sacred Heart be blessed for this marvellous and rapid expansion of her Archconfraternity; let us thank her for the innumerable favours granted to those who invoke her with confidence. To her be thanksgiving and glory for so many and such admirable prodigies of grace. Her maternal hands unceasingly pour down upon us the ineffable treasures of grace which she draws from the Sacred Heart. To our Mother once more our praise and thanksgiving is due for having so inspired our Father in the choice of the new title under which she wishes to be invoked. We cannot doubt but that it was she who dictated to him this ever blest title: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Did Father Chevalier think, when he pondered over this title for the first time, that it would resound from one end of the world to the other? Did he know the glory that would result to his divine Mother? Did he foresee that this new invocation would open to souls an inexhaustible source of blessings and graces? This is his secret and we have not been able to penetrate it, but this we do know, that the humble missionary fulfilled faithfully his promise to honour and have honoured in a special way his August Protectress. And in a wonderful way, the Most Holy Virgin wishes in her turn, to give her apostle some share in her glory. Everywhere that Our Lady of the Sacred Heart will be invoked, it will be known that Mary inspired Father Chevalier with this ineffable name and that she entrusted to him and to his Congregation the glorious mission of making it known throughout the entire universe.

To accomplish this laborious, though consoling task, a periodical journal became indispensable. Of this Father Chevalier was fully convinced, but amongst his young confreres he could find no one who had, if not the ability, at least the time necessary to devote to this new work. None of us, overburdened as we already were, could add more to his daily task.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart herself came to the aid of her devoted apostle.

The day after Christmas of the same year, 1864, there arrived at Issoudun a young priest from the Marseilles diocese. He had been sent by his Bishop, Monsignor Cruice, to study at first hand the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The holy Bishop had said to him, "See if this new Congregation can be useful to us for the work of the Priests of the Sacred Heart that we wish to revive at Marseilles." This project, unfortunately, did not succeed. Before the return of this priest, Monsignor Cruice was suddenly struck with a serious illness and died shortly after. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had other designs for this

young priest though he little suspected this. She had chosen him to be the first editor of her Annals.

Father Jouet stayed less than 48 hours at Issoudun, but that short time was sufficient for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to make of him one of her most ardent and devoted apostles. The first fruit of his visit was the publication of the Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the first number of which appeared in January, 1866. Father Jouet remained in charge of this work for seventeen years.

Father Vandel, well known to the friends of the Petite Oeuvre; came the following year (1865). In the Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of December, 1907, Father Lanetin has related better than we could, the providential circumstances which brought Father Vandel to Issoudun, so we will borrow his account.

"Father Vandel, by his zeal and holiness, has contributed in such a large measure to the success and development of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, that he may rightly be considered as its second Founder. When we recall the providential meeting of these two men of God, (Father Chevalier and Father Vandel), we also recall the origin of the Petite Oeuvre, and the part each had in its establishment.

On the 8th December, 1854, under the auspices of the Immaculate Virgin, each had formed the project of spreading the reign of the Heart of Jesus. On this day, Father Chevalier had laid the foundation of his Congregation of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and Father Vandel, while celebrating Holy Mass, determined to establish the Oeuvre des Campagnes.

Each in his own way sought the means of establishing and strengthening his work - the first to give missionaries to the Church and the second to come to the aid of the parishes deprived of priests. At that time they had not the slightest idea that God would unite them for a common work. Yet that is exactly what happened in March, 1866.

They met at Amelie-les-Bains in the Pyrenees where they had come to rest and renew their strength, each exhausted by illness and work. In their intimate conversations they liked to speak of their projects. It was from one of these interviews that there emerged the idea of the Apostolic School. Father Vandel said, 'I proposed to the Council of the Oeuvre des Campagnes a very simple means of obtaining resources in view of vocations to the Priesthood. To my great regret it was refused.'

'What was it?' asked Father Chevalier.

'I don't like to tell you. You'll laugh at me, too.'

'No, tell me.'

'Well, it is this. I proposed to the General Council to ask the associates of the Oeuvre des Campagnes for only one sou a year. One sou!

No one would have refused it! And these sous added together would, at least I hoped they would, have been able to give priests and apostles to the Church.'

This was a ray of light for Father Chevalier. For some time he had been perplexed as to how to find recruits for his little society.

'Dear Father Vandel,' he said quickly, 'I accept your idea. You too are going to be a Missionary of the Sacred Heart. You have already been thinking of it for some time. Together we will establish an Apostolic School and we will make use of your idea of the one sou a year, for it sounds quite feasible.'

Father Vandel was very happy over Father Chevalier's acceptance. Forthwith they outlined a plan of the work. It was called the Petite Oeuvre, because of the slenderness of the means at their disposal and the Petite Oeuvre of the Sacred Heart on account of the noble end towards which it tended. This end was to form apostles who would make the Sacred Heart of Jesus everywhere known and loved.

That was forty years ago. The work was begun and has developed even in the midst of storms. It has borne fruits beyond all expectation and whatever may be the sorrows and difficulties of the present, everything points to the hope that these fruits will increase still more in the future. And so it was due to Father Chevalier that Father Vandel saw the foundation of the work he had so much at heart."

Thus, in less than three years Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had given Father Chevalier three worthy collaborators: Father Guyot who after a short time became the first Novice Master of the Congregation, Father Vandel, the founder and first director of the Petite Oeuvre, and Father Jouet who established and then for many years edited the Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

This was a great consolation for Father Founder, who henceforth saw his work strengthened, and its normal development assured. His confidence in Mary Immaculate had not been in vain. The most Holy Virgin, more than ever was showing Herself the Protectress of the Congregation.

CHAPTER 6

In the preceding chapter we had to anticipate a little in order to make our story clear. We shall now go back a few years.

Eight years had elapsed since Father Chevalier had taken possession of the house so providentially procured by the Immaculate Virgin.

These eight years of excessive work and great privations had thoroughly undermined his health which was now seriously endangered by granular laryngitis. His extreme weakness made us fear for his recovery. The doctors gave little hope. They prescribed absolute rest - more difficult for the patient than the most fatiguing work - and severe treatment at various hot springs, which necessitated his being absent for long periods.

This severe trial lasted more than two years, during which Father Chevalier was obliged more than once to entrust the care of the Community and of his works to less capable and less experienced hands.* This new cross sufficient to dishearten even a strong soul, did not shake either the energetic courage or the confidence of the venerated Father. Though the violence of the malady wore out his body, it served but to make his soul stronger.

Never in these sad years did we know him to utter a word of complaint or anxious disquietude. On the contrary, he endeavoured to calm our fears, holding up before us the great motives of confidence and abandonment to the Divine Will. Thus at the height of his own sufferings, he was giving comfort and guidance to his confreres. And so, far from hindering the progress of the work, this long period of illness proved, by the mercy of the Heart of Jesus, a source of new and fruitful blessings.

Pius IX had said, "Increase and multiply", and we now see how the desire of the holy Pontiff was realised. The Community became more numerous and required a larger house. Though still convalescent, Father Chevalier devoted the year 1866 to this new enterprise.

Meanwhile, the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was spreading with a marvellous rapidity. Mary showed herself more and more lavish towards those who appealed with confidence to her ineffable power with the Heart of Jesus. The testimonies of gratitude for graces received became more numerous every day; in fact, they could be counted by the thousand.

Seeing these marvels, Father Chevalier was full of gratitude towards the incomparable Treasurer of the Heart of Jesus who performed them. He asked himself what means he could adopt to give more glory and show greater gratitude to this Divine Mother whom no one ever invoked in vain.

* Father Piperon, in his humility, is probably referring to himself

He wrote in the Annals of May, 1867, "This idea was absorbing all our attention when several persons who had experienced the power of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart sent several diamonds and jewels to be used to form a crown for her." It was suggested that we could perhaps have this crown blessed by the Sovereign Pontiff and obtain from His Holiness the signal privilege of a solemn crowning in his name. This was an inspiration for Father Chevalier, but he did not see how he could realise the project.

For a crowning he needed a statue, worthy in some degree of this honour. Now the little painted plaster statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart surmounting the altar in the tiny sanctuary dedicated to our Mother would never do for a solemn crowning.

This was a serious problem with apparently no solution. But Father Chevalier was nothing daunted. For a Mother so tenderly loved a devoted son fears no difficulty. Now he ardently loved his Heavenly Mother. With a firm determination he wanted to have her loved and he would use every means in his power to this end.

To carry out this design he needed three things: first, a statue worthy of bearing a crown, second, a chapel to receive the statue, and lastly, the diadem to encircle the brow of his Mother. He wished that all should be grand, rich, of precious material, and fashioned by skilful hands for was it not for the Queen of Heaven, for the Mother of God?

Ah! if our venerated Father could have foreseen the future when he laid the first foundation of the Church of the Sacred Heart, he would not have hesitated to give it wider proportions, more in keeping with the needs of an important pilgrimage. He had some presentiment of this however.

One day when he was talking intimately to us about the future of his work, he pointed to the walls of the Church then in course of construction and barely raised above the level of the ground and said, "A time will come when you will see numerous crowds flocking here from different parts of France and elsewhere."

"When I see that," replied one of his hearers, "I'll declare you a prophet!"

Nothing at that time could have led us to believe that this new church, as yet scarcely begun, would become a place of frequent pilgrimages. But Father Chevalier repeated with firm assurance, "You yourselves will see it with your own eyes, and you will bless the Sacred Heart for it."

We have indeed seen these words of our Father literally verified and we rejoice and give praise to the Sacred Heart for the glory which thereby accrues to the Immaculate Virgin, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart took place on 2nd July, 1864. It was attended by a great concourse of the faithful,

not only from the neighbourhood of Issoudun, but also from the neighbouring dioceses. For sixty years the town had not witnessed such a gathering of people nor such splendid celebrations.

Five bishops and an immense number of priests had responded to the invitation of the Archbishop of Bourges. The consecrating Prelate was Mgr. Guibert, then Archbishop of Tours, and later Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne had conceded this honour to him.

This solemnity, of which it is impossible to report the details in this short account, was the origin of the pilgrimages. From that time the faithful servants of Mary began to flow towards Issoudun from all the dioceses of France and the neighbouring countries. They wanted to come and see the privileged sanctuary, the centre of the Association, and to make their petitions at the foot of the altar dedicated to the new Madonna. Before this holy image they felt they could pray more fervently and their prayers were more surely answered. Gratitude also drew many pilgrims to the shrine.

However, the Church of the Sacred Heart had, in appearance, nothing to attract these great assemblies. The white walls were entirely bare, the pillars unsculptured, the windows framed for the greater part with bare bricks. Our Lady's altar which at that time was situated at the extreme end of a side nave was so tiny and the chapel so narrow that the pilgrims could scarcely be persuaded that this was the privileged sanctuary where they had come to pray. Father Chevalier, the witness of this unceasing concourse, was assuredly consoled, but his filial love for the Immaculate Virgin made him feel deeply humiliated when he considered the poverty of this cramped chapel. He felt keenly the necessity of giving to Mary a larger sanctuary more in accord with the ever increasing devotion of the faithful.

What could he do to remedy this state of things? He had recourse to his customary advisor; he gave a full account of everything to the prudent Archbishop of Bourges, making known his intention of building at the back of the main altar a larger chapel more fitted to honour Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

It was a difficult problem bristling with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Would this addition harmonise with the architectural plan of the Church? Would it not endanger the solidity of the still-unfinished building since, to execute the new plan, it would be necessary to pull down the back of the sanctuary and reconstruct it on an entirely different basis. To many this proposal seemed great temerity, but love for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart solved all these problems and the pilgrims now bear witness to the happy solution. They are continually praising the atmosphere of recollection and prayer which pervades the new sanctuary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Meantime, Father Chevalier had confided to the firm of Chartier, a famous Parisian jewellery establishment, the task of making the two crowns.

He requested them to spare nothing so that the crowns might be as rich as possible. M. Blanchard, a talented sculptor, was directed to carve a statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart according to the image which he had himself conceived from a large block of gleaming white Carrara marble. And so the three great works in preparation for the crowning were satisfactorily proceeding apace.

In February, 1869, Father Chevalier published in the Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the following lines,

"Dear Associates, our journey to Rome is about to take place. The reasons for delay have almost disappeared. The diadem which we described to you recently is finished, and the miniature bronze statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart - a real work of art - has received its final touch.* And so we hope, in the early days of the month to have the crown blessed by the Holy Father, and to offer him the bronze statue in the name of the Association, as a testimony of our deep veneration and gratitude."

It was barely two years since Father Chevalier full of confidence in his powerful Protectress had taken the resolution of building the new chapel of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and already this difficult enterprise was nearing its completion. It was marvellous to see with what ease and rapidity this important work was being done. From the point of view of human prudence, it might have appeared rash to hasten the work so much, but we believe that our venerated Father, inspired by the Immaculate Virgin, acted under her special direction. How often would he say to us with deep gratitude, "Is it not she," he used often to say to us in deep gratitude, "who does everything in our little Congregation?" And we, who every day witnessed her marvellous power and who felt the sweet and constant guidance of her maternal hands, repeated with no less conviction, "Yes, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart works these miracles and to her alone belongs the glory."

However, this absorbing occupation did not make Father Chevalier forget the needs of the Congregation. For years he had been preparing the Constitutions. In the months preceding his departure for Rome, he put the final touch to this important task, on which the whole future of his work depended. He wanted to place these Constitutions in the hands of the Holy Father, and to ask him for their first approbation.

This journey had the happiest results. Pius IX received the pilgrim very graciously. He blessed the two crowns and praised highly their richness and workmanship. He granted the request that the statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart be crowned in his name, then taking a picture of Our Lady that Father Chevalier presented to him, he wrote beneath it these words which exhale such a sweet perfume of humility, "Pius IX, who desires to love the Blessed Virgin Mary." The great but truly humble Pontiff

* This bronze statuette was a replica of the marble one being prepared for the new chapel. Father Chevalier had destined it to be a gift for Pius IX.

wished in this way to unite his tribute with that of the numerous associates of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in order to glorify the ineffable power of Mary over the Heart of her Divine Son.

The holy Founder who, as we have already said, had brought the Constitutions of his Society of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, placed them at the feet of the Holy Father in order that he might bless them. They were then sent to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to be examined before receiving Canonical Approbation. Some months later the Decree of Praise was sent to the Archbishop of Bourges. Thus the wishes of Father Chevalier were realised.

He hurried back to Issoudun, his soul flooded with consolation, and his heart filled with gratitude for all the benefits bestowed on him by Pius IX.

Monsignor de la Tour d'Auvergne, Archbishop of Bourges, had been delegated by the Holy Father to preside in his name at the crowning which had been fixed for the following 8th September. Hence, scarcely six months remained in which to make preparations. Without delay, Father Chevalier set to work with his accustomed energy, sparing himself no fatigue, no sacrifice for the glory of his Divine Mother.

The 8th September, 1869, was a memorable day for Issoudun. Everything helped to make it a brilliant success. After a week of either rain or dull weather, the sun rose in all its splendour with not the least cloud to dim the perfect azure of the sky. It seemed that, to honour their Queen, the Angels had driven away all that could trouble the serenity of the heavens. The town was hidden under garlands, greenery and flowers. In each street and each market-place a triumphal arch had been erected while from every house floated banners of Our Blessed Lady. One might have thought that Issoudun had become again as in former days, the city of Mary, or that the old town was transformed into a vast temple where praises were sung to the Queen of Heaven. Fifteen Archbishops and bishops who had come at the invitation of Mgr. de la Tour, numerous ecclesiastical dignitaries and more than 700 priests, innumerable pilgrims from all parts, and the civil and military authorities of the town and department, assisted at this manifestation of faith and love towards Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. All souls vibrated in unison, all hearts were filled with joy. But there was one which was not.

It was that of our much loved Father who had prepared by such long and severe labour for the triumph of his dear Mother. He was plunged in an ocean of bitterness. On the morning of the Feast, when preparations for the High Mass were just being completed, he sent for me to come to his study. I found him alone, extremely pale, his face betraying a profound sadness. Without saying a word, he pointed to a seat. Greatly mystified, I said to him, "Why, what is the matter, Father? What has happened? Are you ill?" His only reply was to hand me a letter from Rome. It had arrived by the morning post, addressed to the Archbishop of Bourges, and the latter had, without delay, had it delivered to Father Chevalier. This letter called

him to Rome as promptly as possible. He was to submit to the Holy See all that had been written and printed on the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and her Association. That was, in substance, the content of the letter.

What motive had dictated it, we have never been able to discover. Nothing could have made us foresee it, nothing has since happened which could throw any light on the riddle. As far as we ourselves personally are concerned, we have always thought that this trial on this day, at this hour and with its accompanying circumstances, came to Father Chevalier from the Maternal Hand of Mary. This tender Mother wishes to increase the merits of her devoted servant by preserving him from any thought of complacency in his work, for if this day was a triumph for the Ineffable Treasurer of the Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, was it not also a day of glory for the one who had prepared this triumph for her? We are convinced that on this day a brilliant gem was fashioned for the crown of our venerated Father.

However that may be, the effect was as violent as it was unexpected, and the suffering was excessive. On learning the contents of the letter, Father Chevalier thought that he was obliged to interrupt the celebrations which had just begun, to dismiss his distinguished guests and send the pilgrims home. He had seen as in a flash, the frightful disorder that would result. God permitted it thus in the designs of His Infinite Mercy. Then, in his distress he asked the Archbishop, "What are we to do? Must we stop the celebrations?" The kindly prelate had replied, "First of all, calm yourself. You owe obedience to the Holy See. You make the resolution of submitting yourself simply to its prescriptions. The rest is our concern. We shall follow to the letter the programme of the feast, just as we have arranged it. There is nothing to prevent us from doing this, since we have received no order to the contrary. Go ahead with your celebrations. But above all, control yourself and let nothing transpire today of this incident."

He obeyed this injunction strictly. As he related the Archbishop's decision to us, calm returned to the soul of our beloved Father. When we left him, after the exchange of a few words, he had controlled his first violent emotion. In spite of all this, the feast which for the others was filled with holy joy, became for him a painful trial which was to be prolonged for some time yet. Suffering is the portion of generous souls, the bread with which the Sacred Heart nourishes them.

After the feast, in conjunction with the Archbishop and under his direction, Father Chevalier corresponded to the desire of the Sacred Congregation, and this troublesome affair turned to the glory of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Everything that had been so far printed on the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, absolutely everything: Annals, books, pamphlets, prayers, leaflets, even the pastoral of the Archbishop of Bourges on the occasion of the Consecration - all was remitted to the Sacred Congregation and all was

carefully examined. Nothing was found deserving of censure and the denunciations which had been made were found to be groundless. Was not this outcome of the whole affair an indirect approbation of the doctrine on which the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is based, and an encouragement to propagate it with new assurance and more ardent zeal?

It goes without saying that this result was a great relief to Father Founder. He thanked the Heart of Jesus with the utmost gratitude.

The time had come for us to put into practice the Constitutions recently blessed by Pius IX. Father Chevalier profited by the annual retreat which followed soon after the Crowning, to propose to his confreres that they should pronounce the vows henceforth required by the Constitutions. The first Religious vows date from the end of this Retreat. As we have already said, up to that time, the aspirants were free to make private vows, but no one of us had been able to bind himself to the Congregation by the sacred engagements of the Religious Life. A new life commenced for us.

If the origin of the Congregation dates back to the 8th December, 1854, its organization, such as Father Founder had conceived it, and as he left it at his death, dates from the last week of September, 1869. On the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, Father Guyot, as Master of Novices, inaugurated at Montlucon in the Parish of St. Paul, the first Novitiate House. Since then, all the new religious have received regular formation, according to the Constitutions.*

The first stage of the life of the Congregation, (its infancy), was terminated. It had lasted a little over 14 years from the time that Father Chevalier and his first confrere had taken possession of the House of the Sacred Heart. Henceforth the little Congregation was organised in accord with the requirements of religious life. Since it was now adopted by Holy Church, it could develop normally in spite of the innumerable difficulties and trials which the future held in store. Father Founder foresaw them and accepted them in advance, well convinced that the Sacred Heart would not abandon him in difficult moments. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart also was watching over the work she loved so much.

* The parish of Saint Paul was in a factory area little favourable to the recollection of a Novitiate. Father Guyot realised this better than anyone else, but circumstances independent of his own wishes imposed this choice upon him. A few years later, following upon a change of circumstances he transferred his novices to the little town of Saint Gerand-le-Puy into the old chateau of the same name. Here they remained until the expulsions of 1880.

CHAPTER 7

The remaining years of our venerated Father's life were not only the most fruitful in works, but also the most difficult. It would require a whole volume to give an account of these last 38 well-filled years of his life.

Now, our duty is simply to write a sketch which, in spite of us, is already far too lengthy. Besides, neither our talent nor our strength permits us to undertake a work of great length. We shall therefore content ourselves with sketching in broad outline the rest of this fruitful career - thus to fix in our memory those facts of which we were the witness.

After the revelations of Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary, the devotion to the Sacred Heart remained for a long time the portion of a limited number of privileged souls. It had only begun to be known in the parishes after the Beatification of the humble Visitandine to whom Jesus had manifested His Treasures of love and Mercy. Up to that time, few churches possessed a statue of the Sacred Heart, and fewer still had altars erected in His honour. If, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the devotion to the Sacred Heart had made any progress, it was almost solely in Religious Congregations and amongst chosen souls. Among the great majority of the faithful it was practically unknown.

How can we account for this? The reason is that the devotion to the Heart of Jesus was not taught, under the false pretext that it went beyond the grasp of the ordinary faithful. Excellent in itself, it was admittedly suitable for the cloisters but not by any means for the simple faithful who ought not to be overburdened with practices of perfection, not necessary for salvation. We humbly confess we have never understood this specious distinction, which for so long a time deceived many otherwise zealous priests.

Thank God, since the second half of the last century, this prejudice had lost ground and tends more and more to disappear. But in 1854, when our venerated Father was laying the foundation of his Congregation, the prejudice was still in all its vigour. A simple instance whose authenticity we can guarantee will suffice to confirm what has been said.

In 1864, Father Superior had given me the task of travelling through the different dioceses to collect alms from the faithful in order to continue the construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart. About the middle of autumn, one Saturday evening, I arrived at Montluçon, where Mgr. de Dreux-Brezé, Bishop of Moulins had sent me to call on the Parish Priest of Notre-Dame, the Archpriest Antoine Guillaumet. He gave me such a cordial welcome that after 49 years I still preserve a most grateful remembrance of it. During the conversation which followed the evening meal, the

zealous pastor said, "Father, would you like to address a few words to our men during their Mass tomorrow?"

Now, this Mass for men was the work of predilection of this great apostle. He had lavished on it the best part of his pastoral life and had put his whole heart into its success. This latter had accorded so well with his efforts that at last he was able to say to these men, "In the beginning I used to exhort you to conquer human respect and fulfil your religious duties, but today there is so much good example that I need to caution you not to go to Confession and Holy Communion just because of others, but to do so solely for the glory of God."

In those times of indifference when it was good form for men to neglect to fulfil their religious duties, it was a rare spectacle to see the men of Montlucon filling to capacity the vast naves of the Church of Notre-Dame. Such was this Mass for the men.

I replied, "I will preach to your parishioners with great pleasure. I will speak to them of the Heart of Jesus."

"Oh, no! Not of the Sacred Heart. Choose any other subject you like, but do not speak of the Sacred Heart. Keep that instruction for the Solemn Mass."

I was astonished at such a rejoinder from the venerated Archpriest, so burning with zeal and so greatly esteemed by the Bishop and by his confreres as a man of keen judgment and extraordinary theological knowledge. I insisted on knowing the reason of his reluctance.

"But, why do you not wish me to speak of the Sacred Heart to these men who are so faithful to their duties? Shouldn't they too, know and love the Heart of Jesus? Wasn't Our Lord speaking to all men when He said to St. Margaret Mary, 'Behold this Heart which has so loved men'?"

"Oh, yes, Father, that is true, but you must understand that our men are neither theologians, religious nor pious souls, but just simple faithful who are exact in the fulfilment of their duty, but who go no further. We cannot burden them with practices of piety which are works of supererogation. That would put them in danger of giving up everything."

The above remark that these men were neither theologians, nor religious, nor pious souls clearly reveals the prejudice against the devotion. It seems equivalent to saying, "There is a category of Christians who must never be taught the devotion to the Sacred Heart because this devotion is reserved for the elite. The simple faithful are incapable of grasping the sublime language of love. To think this is an error which for too long a time has deprived the little and humble of the blessings promised by Our Lord to all those who honour His Sacred Heart."

Is not the language of the heart the simplest, the most easily understood? Every Christian living the life of faith, even the simplest and

most ignorant is deeply moved on hearing of the great mysteries of the Passion and Death of the Divine Saviour. And when we add, "Behold how the Heart of Jesus loves you, see how He has suffered for you", if there still remains in the soul some uprightness, if the heart still preserves some honourable sentiments, it will cry out, as did Saint John, the Apostle of charity, "I must love the Heart of Jesus since It has first loved me."

Is not this cry of a grateful soul a homage rendered to the Heart of Jesus - an act of devotion to this adorable Heart? There is then, no reasonable excuse for depriving the simple faithful, the little ones, the humble, of the treasures of mercy that this Divine Heart wishes to pour out on all those who honour It. Has He not promised to all these, His most abundant favours?

As I was reflecting in this strain, Mgr. Guillaumet was pursuing his argument in the hope of dissuading me from speaking of the Heart of Jesus. But I was forced to reply, "I am deeply grieved, Monsignor, at being obliged to disappoint you, at a time I am your guest and you have shown me such kindness. But before leaving my Community, I promised that if an occasion of preaching was offered me, I would speak only of the Heart of Jesus. I must remain faithful to that promise. Now, I regret having made that promise, since it deprives me of the pleasure of conforming with your wishes. But your good parishioners will lose nothing by it; on the contrary, they will gain. The eloquent words of their Pastor would be of greater profit to them than mine. Nevertheless, if you absolutely insist that I speak instead of you, I will do so, but my subject will be the Sacred Heart."

The next morning, just as Mass was commencing, the Archpriest said to me, "Preach." I obeyed. The attention and recollection of this immense congregation of men of all classes of society, the interest they showed when I spoke of the Heart of Jesus proved once more that it was not necessary to be a theologian, a religious or a chosen soul to appreciate devotion to the Sacred Heart. Simple, little and humble souls have all the necessary aptitudes for profiting by the graces Our Lord has promised to all who honour His Divine Heart.

After Mass, the zealous pastor thanked me, adding, "If I had known how you were going to treat this important subject, I would have made no difficulty at all about allowing you to speak." As he said this, I thought how dangerous it is to allow oneself to be guided by prejudice, since its fatal influence can bend the decisions of even the most upright minds.

Father Chevalier would never admit that there could be a category of Christians who must be left in ignorance of the devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Everyone, he said, must love this Divine Heart; everyone has need of Its graces; therefore we must teach it to everyone. And so in all his works, he had no other aim but to promote this devotion by every possible means.

Right from his entrance into the seminary, he was deeply convinced

that "this devotion, having been revealed by Our Lord Himself to St. Margaret Mary, as the remedy for the evils of a society frozen by indifference and devoured by frightful corruption",* there is in reality, no more salutary means to work for the relief of our modern society than to devote oneself to making this Divine Heart known to all Christians and loved by all without exception.

Besides, when he received Father Chevalier in audience for the first time in 1860, Pius IX had unshakeably confirmed him in his ideas. "The Church and society," he said, "have no hope except in the Heart of Jesus; He it is Who will cure all our ills." These words of the Supreme Pontiff had stirred an immense joy in the heart of our Father; he had welcomed them from the venerable lips of the Supreme Pastor as if they were an oracle. He saw in them the assurance that Heaven was blessing his projects. So, immediately upon his return, he wanted us to share his joy by repeating these words to us with deep emotion. Moreover to stimulate our devotion and zeal, he frequently recalled them to us.

No book or discourse could please the devout St. Bernard if he did not find therein the name of Jesus. Likewise our Father Founder desired that everything in our life, in our works, our discourses, our churches, in our offices and our prayers, should recall the Divine Heart of Jesus - that Heart Which has so loved men. He wanted everything to bear the imprint of this blest Heart; without this Sacred Heart all became insipid.

From this arose the pious custom established amongst his children, of commencing all their prayers and exercises and even of saluting each other with the touching invocation: "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!" just as, in certain Catholic countries, the faithful greet each other with the salutation, "Praised be Jesus Christ!"

Hence, also, the name Missionaries of the Sacred Heart given to the members of his Congregation - a name very dear to our Father, expressing as it does with such precision, the end which he placed before himself in all his works - the apostolate of devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

He wished that all the Communities be called houses of the Sacred Heart, that the image of this adorable Heart be found in all the common rooms and in each cell, together with that of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and St. Joseph, model and Patron of the friends of the Sacred Heart. The Crucifix and these three images are the only adornments which he allowed on the bare walls of their cells. All the churches, chapels and oratories belonging to the Congregation must have for principal patron, the Heart of Jesus, and if it is possible, an altar dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and another to St. Joseph - or at least their images. This custom proves to us the ardent desire which consumed our Father Founder, and his zeal that the Heart of Jesus be glorified everywhere.

* From the first page of the Constitutions.

We see this in a still more evident manner in the basilica of Issoudun which, after his Congregation, was the work to which Father Chevalier devoted the greatest care.

How he loved it - this graceful basilica! With what jealous solicitude he directed all its works. Had it been in his power to do so, he would have liked to make it the finest monument erected on earth to the honour of the Sacred Heart. Even so it can be said without exaggeration that it is a poem to the glory of the Heart of Jesus and to the praise of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

"Indeed, the Heart of Jesus is there, in entirety, in the prophecies which revealed beforehand the mysteries of Its love; in the symbols which prefigured It; in Its mortal life when It beat in the breast of the Man-God as He preached, cured and pardoned; in Its suffering life, retraced for us in the beautiful frescoes of the Stations of the Cross; in Its glorious life in Heaven, and in the Saints who on earth were favoured with special graces or wonderful revelations. This life of the Divine Heart is found complete in the Sacrament of the Altar. For this reason everything in this basilica converges on the tabernacle, the door of which is a heart of gold." *

This poem - the basilica - was conceived by Father Chevalier's love for the Divine Heart. He directed its execution down to the smallest details. Consumed with zeal for the house of God, he made every possible effort to increase its splendour. If it was a question of honouring the Heart of Jesus, his faith and love burned with a new ardour and no obstacle or difficulty could hinder him. He stopped only before the impossible.

We remember that in the beginning when he resolved to build the Church he wanted to give it the form of a heart. He entertained this project for a long time, to the great despair of the architect who, with all his skill, could find no means of executing it. It was very difficult for Father Chevalier to renounce the idea. He used to say, "If we possessed the necessary money, we would seek out a man of genius who would be able to surmount the difficulties and solve this problem." This vain dream - for that is what it was - was a passing one. But it reveals to us the state of Father Chevalier's soul, on fire with the longing to make devotion to the Sacred Heart tangible even to the simplest souls. However, from this dream which was, as it were, the bud, there blossomed out the rich ornamentation of the basilica.

If the splendour of the house of God occupied his thoughts, his most holy ambition did not stop there. Certainly it is praiseworthy to construct rich sanctuaries, to adorn them magnificently for the glory of the Divine Majesty, but these superb monuments have value in the eyes of our Heavenly Father only in so far as they are the homage of grateful hearts consumed with His divine love. Jesus does not come to ask us for perish-

* From "The Pilgrim's Guide to the Basilica."

able goods. Is He not the sovereign Master of the earth and of all the treasures which it contains? What He wants, what He asks for is our love, our heart. "My child, give Me thy heart."

Formed in the school of the Apostle of the Sacred Heart, Saint Margaret Mary, our venerated Founder had ever this Sacred Heart in mind. If he took for himself and gave to the members of his Congregation the glorious title of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it was with the idea and the ardent desire of devoting himself unreservedly to the work of leading souls to this Divine Heart. To this end all that Our Lord had asked of St. Margaret Mary, all that could contribute towards making the Heart of Jesus known and loved, excited his zeal. With the Apostle St. Paul, he could say, "The charity of Christ urges me." Let us see it in action.

Our Lord had asked St. Margaret Mary to spread the image of His Sacred Heart and had promised to bless the houses where it was honoured. Father Chevalier, as we have seen spread millions of these images throughout the world.

Nothing delighted him so much as did the great feasts of the Church. He wanted them celebrated with solemnity according to their rite, but when it was question of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, or of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, or of St. Margaret Mary, then he spared nothing to give them all possible splendour: beautiful decorations, well executed singing, rich vestments and brilliant illuminations gave these feasts a particular solemnity. They were usually prepared for by a triduum of sermons and on the day itself a celebrated preacher gave the instruction at the Communion Mass and the sermon at evening devotions. All day long, from the time of the first Mass until evening, the Blessed Sacrament would be exposed for the adoration of the faithful.

How lovely were these solemnities! The Catholic population of Issoudun used to prepare for them by Confession and on the day itself they offered a Communion of Reparation for the ingratitude and outrages of which the Sacred Heart is the object in the very Sacrament of His Love. An act of reparation, recited by the celebrant, terminated the evening devotions.

Great was the joy and consolation of our venerated Father when he saw the eagerness of the faithful to respond thus to the desires of Our Lord. However, his zeal was not yet satisfied. Was love ever known to say "It is enough?"

Our Lord said to St. Margaret Mary: "I promise you, in the excess of My mercy, that Its all-powerful love will grant to all those who communicate on nine consecutive first Fridays, the grace of final repentance. They will not die in My displeasure, nor without receiving the Sacraments, and My Heart will be their assured refuge in that last hour."

For a long time this merciful promise was unknown to the faithful in general. Through some imaginary fear it was not revealed to them. Father Chevalier judged wisely that since Jesus had undertaken this engagement, He

must wish it to be known to all. He, therefore, spread the knowledge of this divine promise, and invited all souls devoted to the Heart of Jesus to make the First Friday Communions according to the intentions of Our Lord. His appeal was heard. Each month, in the basilica, the number of Communions increased. On that day there was Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and the feast terminated with Benediction and an act of Reparation. To the monthly Communion was soon added that of the Friday of each week, then the daily Communion of Reparation made by groups of seven persons who succeeded each other at the Holy Table according to a pre-arranged order, or by one person admitted to daily Communion.

To complete these pious practices, Father Chevalier had established the very praiseworthy custom of celebrating by public exercises the Month of the Sacred Heart. Thus in the basilica there was unceasing homage offered to the divine Love of Jesus for men, together with acts of reparation against His infinite mercy.

Such was the work to which our venerated Father devoted his entire life, and for which he formed the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. However great, however important it seems to us, it still did not suffice for his love of the Heart of Jesus and the ardour of his zeal.

CHAPTER 8

The Heart of Jesus, King and Centre of all hearts occupied unceasingly the thoughts of Father Chevalier. Neither excessive work, sufferings, persecutions, nor the most painful trials could turn his thoughts aside therefrom. He would have feared to merit an anathema if he, a Missionary of that Heart which had given him so many graces and had captivated him by Its powerful attractions, had proposed to himself any other end in his works. Like the Royal Prophet, he ardently desired that all creatures, the angels and Saints in Heaven, men on earth, in a word all things should contribute their homage to the Divine Heart.

Already he had taught us to glorify this Heart, through Mary His Immaculate Mother, and in union with Her, when he made known to us the new title, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, under which he desired that Our Blessed Lady should henceforth be invoked in the basilica. He used then to say to us:

"We will recognise, by this special title, which resumes in some

sort all other titles, the ineffable power which this sweet Saviour has given Her over His adorable Heart. We will beg this powerful Virgin to lead us Herself to the Heart of Jesus; to reveal to us the mysteries of mercy and love which It contains; to open to us the treasures of grace of which It is the source and to distribute them Herself, by Her maternal hands on all those who invoke Her or who recommend themselves to Her intercession. Moreover, we will unite with our Mother to glorify the Heart of Jesus and to repair with Her the outrages of which this Divine Heart is the object on the part of sinners."

These words, pronounced more than fifty years ago, reveal to us the intimate thoughts of our Father. Would it be possible to express in clearer terms his ardent desire to see devotion to Mary occupy a preponderant place in the cult of love given to the Heart of Jesus? He desired to learn from his heavenly Mother the divine perfections of the Sacred Heart. Who, more than She, has sounded Its infinite depths? On the other hand, knowing how powerless is the intelligence and the heart of man to glorify the Divine Heart, he sought in this powerful Virgin the remedy of his insufficiency. In other words, to go to the Heart of Jesus through Mary: such was the idea and the constant practice of our venerated Father. We have no doubt that it was under the inspiration of his August Mistress that he was able to express his thought in the glorious and blest title - Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Yes, it is a title truly glorious for our Mother, and blessed by her; a name which the angels of Heaven have rejoiced to carry to all parts of the universe; which so many voices are happy to repeat each day with all the love and confidence of grateful hearts, because Mary unceasingly overwhelms with favours those who invoke her under this loved title!

One of Father Chevalier's deepest joys, his greatest consolation, was the thought that devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had largely contributed towards causing to penetrate more profoundly and more sweetly into the knowledge and love of the Divine Heart.

But Joseph, the humble workman of Nazareth, whom God had united by such intimate ties with Jesus and Mary, was he not destined also to have a special role in the homage rendered to the Heart of Jesus. After the great Mother of God, is he not the saint the best known and most loved. And is there anyone, more than he, consumed with the desire of seeing the Heart of Jesus glorified everywhere? Besides, does not Jesus cherish sentiments of particular tenderness for the faithful guardian of His childhood? Did He not always act towards him as a grateful Son towards a tenderly loved father? Ah! If Joseph was all on fire with love for Jesus, did not Jesus love him more than all others except Mary?

Father Chevalier, then, wanted to establish an Archconfraternity under the title of St. Joseph, Friend of the Sacred Heart, but Holy Church, having remarked that this title did not sufficiently express the prerogatives of the holy patriarch, he substituted for it the more explicit title, Saint Joseph, Model and Patron of the friends of the Sacred Heart.

Father Chevalier wrote later: "To declare that St. Joseph is the exemplar of all those who love the Sacred Heart is to say that he has reached a degree of love for the Heart of Jesus which it is impossible for us to surpass or even to attain to. All that we can do is to beg his help and protection, and try to imitate him. This is why the Church proclaims him not only model but also patron of all those who love the Sacred Heart and wish to advance in this love. We shall then love to have often on our lips this invocation, "St. Joseph, Model and Patron of the friends of the Sacred Heart, pray for us."

The Archconfraternity of Saint Joseph, Model and Patron of the Friends of the Sacred Heart is the second Archconfraternity founded by Father Chevalier, and directed by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The Archconfraternity of the Perpetual Worship of Honour and Reparation to the Sacred Heart is the third, and it completes in a wonderful way the series of works proposed to all the faithful in honour of the Sacred Heart. Everyone, in fact, provided they have good will, can render to the Heart of Jesus, this perpetual worship of honour and reparation whose essential practices are a burden to no-one. Properly understood, they in no way restrict the accomplishment of ordinary duties; rather they furnish us a powerful help to remain faithful to them and to reap more abundant merits from them.

The Perpetual Worship of Honour and Reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was inaugurated in the basilica of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun on the 15th March, 1874. In the Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of that year (June edition) we read:

"This is one more flower in the garden of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, a new practice in Her Association

Proposed to the devout souls of Issoudun, on the 25th March of this year, the Perpetual Worship immediately became established and developed rapidly, carrying treasures of grace with it

We seem to hear Our Lady speaking to us with more joy even than to St. Margaret Mary: 'Ah! What pleasure it gives Me to see you specially honouring this Divine Heart!'"

The origin of this practice, so fruitful in grace, is very humble and simple.

A priest of great piety, and with a modesty and reserve perhaps greater still, had been admitted a few months earlier into the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Consumed with the most ardent desire to consecrate himself unreservedly to the service of the Divine Heart, he sought for some means by which he could please It more and honour It more perfectly.

The humble religious*, the good Pere Miniot as we familiarly called him, thought that Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus ought to

* See footnote on next page.

render to this Divine Heart a special and uninterrupted worship. He wanted some members of each community to be officially deputed each day to offer to the Sacred Heart, in the name of the Congregation, a homage of adoration, gratitude and love and to make an act of reparation for the outrages and ingratitude of which this Sacred Heart is the object on the part of sinners.

Such was the germ of the Perpetual Worship.

Father Chevalier, to whom he communicated his idea, thought it excellent and congratulated him. He promised to bring it to maturity by reflection and prayer, and to use every means in his power to have it put into execution. The little seed had been sown in well-prepared soil; it took root and developed rapidly.

Always attentive to anything that concerned the glory of the Heart of Jesus and the interests of souls, Father Chevalier said to himself, "If this pious practice responds to the desires of Our Lord as manifested to St. Margaret Mary; if it gives solid hope for the spiritual advancement of our Missionaries, why restrict it solely to the members of the Congregation? Would this not be to refuse the Heart of Jesus much fervent homage for which He asks, and to deprive many souls of a powerful means of sanctification? After all, devotion to the Heart of Jesus is not the privilege of one class of Christians, it is offered to all."

Pere Francis Miniot was truly good and humble a religious. Completely devoted to his rule and his spiritual exercises, he practised to the letter the counsel of the author of the Imitation of Christ, "Love to be unknown and esteemed as naught." His life was peaceful and pure, spent either before the tabernacle in long colloquies with the Heart of Jesus, or in the confessional where he welcomed sinners with great tenderness. Whenever his services were needed he was sure to be found in the Church. If the dear Father were still living, I should not have dared to divulge his secret, which probably I alone know. It would have pained him too much.

Pere Miniot was born at Charost, chief town of the Canton of Cher. He made his studies at the Seminary of Bourges. Ordained priest, he entered the parochial ministry. He was Parish Priest of Mer (Indre), where he left behind edifying memories when, in 1871 he entered the Novitiate of Montlucon. After his profession he became a professor at the Apostolic School, then Socius in the Novitiate. From this post he was called to the Scholasticate, at Rome, and then to Paris, whence after the expulsions of 1901, he went to Barcelona.

He died full of merits in 1903, at the age of 72, and after 31 years of religious life.

From that time the Perpetual Worship of Honour, Reparation and Prayer to the Sacred Heart was decided upon. It was presented for the approbation of Mgr. de la Tour d'Auvergne, Archbishop of Bourges, who hastened to approve it. On the 25th March, as was said above, Father Chevalier proposed it to the devout souls of Issoudun who welcomed it with joy; then in the month of June following, it was carried by means of the Annals to the countless associates of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Under the patronage of the ineffable Treasurer of the Heart of Jesus, the Association of the Perpetual Worship produced abundant fruit of grace and virtue, both in the cloister and in the families who adopted it.

Seventeen years later on the 15th April, 1891, His Eminence, Cardinal Parrochi, Vicar of His Holiness, Leo XIII, canonically established it in the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Rome, and on the 26th June of the same year, the Sovereign Pontiff erected it into an Archconfraternity and enriched it with numerous indulgences.

All that relates to the Perpetual Worship can be found clearly explained in the manual, which most of our readers possess, so it is not necessary to speak of it further.

We think it useful, however, to recall a few reflections which we read at the beginning of one of the last editions of this very small book which contains so many good things. It is dated 1903.

"It is with deep joy and gratitude that we publish this new edition of the Manual of the Archconfraternity of the Perpetual Worship of the Sacred Heart.

Must we not rejoice at the rapidity with which the preceding editions have been exhausted? Is it not a proof that devotion to the Sacred Heart is becoming increasingly attractive to souls; a presage of the salvation which this Divine Heart has come to bring to the earth?

We rejoice that all these perpetual acts of love and reparation have thus been offered to this adorable Heart in compensation for so many outrages which are perpetually offered Him by sinners."

By the three Archconfraternities which he founded, Father Chevalier helped greatly to spread throughout the world the knowledge and love of the most Merciful Heart of Jesus. If each work has its particular object which distinguished it from the other two, all three tend towards the same end which is the Heart of Our Lord.

The Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart reveals to us the treasures of mercy and love enclosed in this infinitely merciful Heart, and teaches us the sure means of sharing in them. This means is Mary, the ineffable Treasurer of this Sacred Heart, Mary, our Mother, who can obtain all for us.

Saint Joseph is presented to us as our exemplar, a finished model in the accomplishment of our duties towards the Sacred Heart and as regards the homage we owe Him. Moreover, he is a very powerful protector, our Patron, in the exercise of our devotion to the Heart of Jesus, Who lavished upon him unceasing testimonies of His affection and for Whom he himself was consumed with flames of the most ardent love.

By the practice of the Perpetual Worship we seek to penetrate further into the intimate depths of the Heart of Jesus. By the daily homage of our whole being and our acts of virtue, we endeavour to offer Him with more fervour our adoration, love and gratitude; to implore His grace with greater confidence in His goodness; to repair more generously the ingratitude and outrages of which He is the object; to compassionate Him in His numberless sufferings and to draw closer the bonds of love which unite us to Him. In one word, the Perpetual Worship helps us to a more perfect practice of devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

Who will ever conceive on this earth the incalculable number of holy works, of acts of virtue produced by our three Archconfraternities? Who will ever know the multitude of souls whom they have helped on the way of salvation?

Let us bless the memory of our venerated Founder who has bequeathed to us this precious heritage. The good that they have produced and will continue to produce was desired and willed by this beloved Father when he founded them. They will be for him an endless source of eternal glory and happiness.

CHAPTER 9

Amongst the works which Father Chevalier desired most ardently, could be placed that of souls devoted to the worship of the Sacred Heart.

"As for the devout faithful of either sex who are devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus our Society will seek them out with special care; it will unite them under the title of this same Heart by rules suited to inflame their devotion, but always subject to the authority of the Bishops." (No. 19 of the Constitutions.)

To anyone who reflects on them, these lines reveal clearly the

dispositions of our venerated Father. Quite convinced with St. Margaret Mary "that there is no shorter way of arriving at perfection, and no surer means of salvation than that of consecrating oneself to this Divine Heart to render Him all the homage of love, honour and praise of which we are capable", he wished to neglect nothing to procure for souls of good will this inestimable advantage.

In order to facilitate for his religious the grouping of these souls of good-will under the banner of the Sacred Heart, he wrote the rules of a special Association which was to have for end, "to form, encourage and unite true adorers of the Heart of Jesus, adorers in spirit and truth, who would render to Him an enlightened worship of love, gratitude, reparation and imitation such as He asked of St. Margaret Mary, and by this means to draw down upon souls the infinite treasures of grace and sanctification which He promised in return for homage rendered to Him."

This work, approved by the Archbishop of Bourges, was eagerly welcomed by the faithful. In a short time it counted adherents almost everywhere. Towards the end of 1877, when Father Chevalier begged Pius IX to grant indulgences in favour of this new Association, he could write: "During several years, with the permission and approval of the Archbishop of Bourges, we have made trial of this work, and it counts almost 300 members distributed throughout the various provinces of France, and also in Italy, Belgium, England, Austria and Canada. Every day there are new members."

The request, warmly recommended by the Archbishop, was presented to the Holy Father who, by a brief dated 29th January, 1878, granted the indulgences and other favours asked for. They were the last favours granted to the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart by Pius IX who, right from the beginning had so benevolently welcomed them and, if we may say so, had enveloped them with his high and powerful protection. Ten days after, on 7th February, Pius IX, full of years and merits, left this earth where he had worked and suffered so much for Holy Church, to receive in Heaven the reward of his great virtues.

The last blessing of Pius IX favoured in a wonderful manner the extension of the Society of Souls Devoted to the Worship of the Sacred Heart, who today number nearly 2,000 members isolated, or united in flourishing and numerous confraternities.

It was a great consolation for our Founder to leave behind him on earth a legion of elite souls, all devoted to the Heart of Jesus, consumed with desire to glorify Him by a holy life and to repair by their multiplied acts of homage the outrages of which He is the object.

The venerated Father had a keen affection for the Society of these souls. Let us ask him to bless and multiply its members and to obtain for all an ever increasing fervour.

The sublime prerogatives of the Immaculate Mother of God considered

above all in Her relations with the Heart of Her Divine Son had given rise in the soul of Father Chevalier to such profound sentiments of veneration and to such a high esteem for the perfections with which he saw Her adorned that he unceasingly sought new means of glorifying Her. He would have liked, had it been possible, to see the altars that our poverty erects to Her - thrones, alas, all too unworthy of the Queen of Heaven - surrounded night and day by a guard of honour, rendering uninterrupted homage to Her supereminent greatness, as the angels of God so in Heaven.

Certainly a splendid dream; the spontaneous fruit of his love for his divine Mother, but a dream unable to be realised by human weakness. So our Father was obliged to moderate his desires to the measure of the possible. Let us hear Him express his sentiments on this subject. In his book on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, under an impersonal, but nevertheless transparent form, we read:

"Right from the first days when Mary was given the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, one could not help thinking that this divine Mother would soon form for herself a court of honour comprised of souls who, after Her example, and under Her protection, would consecrate themselves entirely to her service of the Heart of Our Lord. This happy presentiment has been realised, with the approbation of the Archbishop of Bourges and the blessing of the Holy Father."

This court of honour which, according to the saintly Founder's presentiment the Virgin of virgins would form for Herself, was none other than the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In 1895, at the moment when Father Chevalier was publishing the volume from which we have taken the preceding lines, this Congregation had already sent intrepid and generous missionaries to the far distant lands evangelised by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

As the Annals of September, 1874 indicate, this Congregation was born under the very shadow of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart on the 30th August of the same year. However, this first attempt did not succeed as Father Founder wished. Seeds carefully selected and planted in fruitful soil by a skilful gardener do not always produce the fruits hoped for. It was only 8 years later, when Our Lady of the Sacred Heart gave to the little Community she who was destined to be its Mother and as it were its Foundress that the Congregation began to develop.

For 26 years until her death on the 21st February, 1908, Mother Marie Louise Hartzler, in spite of numerous difficulties, had the consolation of seeing her daughters multiply and spread afar: to the Missions of New Guinea and the Gilbert Islands where they occupy numerous stations; to Sydney, Australia, where they have established a novitiate and direct schools; to Tasmania, where the Bishop has called them to instruct and catechise the children of his diocese. If persecution has forced them to leave the house which had been their cradle; if, like so many other Congregations, they have been obliged to close their Novitiate in France for a time and

seek more hospitable lands to continue their works, these trials have not retarded their progress. Belgium has given them a ready welcome; already they have founded many houses there.

The Superior, with her Assistants, has fixed her residence at Thurin, a little town in the diocese of Tournai. There also, beside the Mother House, they have re-opened the Novitiate which gives consoling hopes for the future.

In the thought of the venerated Founder, this Court of Honour which he wished to form for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was, after Her example and under Her protection, to be entirely consecrated to the service of the Heart of Jesus. A new proof that, in all his works, Father Chevalier sought only the reign of the Sacred Heart in souls.

Oh! how wonderful and glorious, is the vocation of a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart! When she is called by the Queen of Heaven to take her place amongst the virgins who form Her court she is destined despite her unworthiness, to fulfil on earth the office of the Angels who in Heaven surround the court of their Queen. What an incomparable honour! This divine Mother, wishes moreover, to consecrate Her privileged daughter to the most intimate service of the Heart of Her well-beloved Son. Placed thus at the very source of all graces by Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the ineffable Treasurer of this Sacred Heart Which She can open when She pleases, what an abundant share of grace will be given to the Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart who is generous in the service of her good Mother, and faithful to her vocation!

All these works, whose formation we have briefly described, are like golden sheaves in a splendid harvest gathered by our venerated Father to the glory of the Sacred Heart and the establishment of His reign in souls. This good and faithful servant did not bury the talents entrusted to him, but by incessant labour and daily sacrifices he multiplied their value. Let us say with assurance, in the words of the Psalmist, that "if he has sown in tears, full of joy he can now place at the feet of the Sovereign Judge a luxuriant harvest."

The books that he has written have also made a rich contribution to this harvest of merits. Like the labours of his ministry and the works that he founded, these writings all tend to the glory of the Heart of Jesus and the extension of His reign in souls.

In the first days of his ministry, when he evangelised the country districts, he felt the need of a collection of hymns in honour of the Heart of Jesus, hymns such as would be within the grasp of the simple souls to whom he preached. Not finding anything that suited him he resolved to compose a collection himself and have it printed for his own use and that of his confreres. It was a very modest booklet of from 24 to 30 pages, containing popular hymns which the choirs of small parishes could easily learn and sing with spirit. This was the humble origin of

the "Collection of Hymns of the Sacred Heart", which Father Chevalier published a few years later and which had its days of glory, since the first edition was followed by many others. We agree that these hymns were not literary masterpieces capable of attracting the attention of poets and satisfying the fastidious. The humble author sought a nobler end. His sole desire was to give to simple souls and to children the means of relishing more fully devotion to the Sacred Heart. Thus he wrought a good work according to the Christian sense of the word, which is better, brings a purer joy and produces more lasting fruits than does literary glory. Hymns to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and Hymns to St. Joseph, Model and Patron of the friends of the Sacred Heart, composed, like the first, as the need and circumstances arose, were published successively in separate volumes, and they, too, were welcomed by the public for whom they were intended. This is proved by the number of editions printed.

The most important writings of Father Chevalier are, certainly, his two volumes: "The Sacred Heart of Jesus" and "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart", according to Holy Scripture, the Fathers and Theology."

Were these two volumes written according to a preconceived plan? Did the author scientifically arrange the materials long before commencing? Did he even intend to write them as he did? To these questions we simply answer, "No, not at all." We say this with assurance because, from the beginning, we followed all the phases of this double monument which he erected, one to the glory of the Sacred Heart and the other to the Treasurer of this adorable Heart.

When, in 1862, Father Chevalier wrote the first modest brochure on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, he had no other intentions than that of expressing clearly the meaning of that new title given to the Mother of God. However, these few pages were the fruitful seeds which produced two volumes. During six years this work was reprinted many times.

In 1868, a few improvements were made. Numerous quotations from the Holy Fathers confirmed the explanations on the new name given to Mary. With this new edition, the pamphlet became larger and more attractive. At the beginning were placed two pages of preliminary reflections on the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, suggesting that this latter devotion calls for devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

A few years later under the title, "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Better Known", the work became a volume of many hundred pages, which went through several editions with new developments. In this volume, richly documented, the Heart of Jesus, in relation to the devotion to the Immaculate Virgin, occupies a considerable place. Then in 1883, there was printed at Rome, under the regard and with the permission of the Master of the Sacred Palace, a large volume under the title, "The Sacred Heart of Jesus in Its Relations with Mary, Studied from the Point of View of Theology and Modern Science", or "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart."

This volume, dedicated to His Holiness, Leo XIII, received from him a very complimentary brief, dated 22nd September, 1884. This was a consolation for Father Chevalier, who was then at grips with countless difficulties aroused by the persecution.

Finally, on the instance of some of his confreres, he decided to publish this important work in two separate volumes. This demanded a complete re-arrangement of a work that had already cost him twenty years of labour. The several editions of each of these volumes prove their value in the eyes of the public.

In 1895, the fourth edition of "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart" was published and five years after, the fourth also of "The Sacred Heart." And we must note that before each new editions the tireless author revised the entire book and made several more or less extensive alterations.

These works, in addition to those necessitated by the government of the Congregation and the ministry of a vast parish, did not suffice for his activity. In 1892, already almost seventy years of age, he published "The School of the Sacred Heart" or "Lessons of Perfection", and the following year the two volumes of "Meditations for Each Day of the Year According to the Spirit of the Sacred Heart."

In 1899 appeared "The Religious History of Issoudun", a large volume of 450 pages, and during his last long painful illness he prepared a new edition of it.

In 1904 he finished his work on "The Apocalypse and Modern Times", which ran into three editions soon after. And in the course of this same year, the "Eight Days' Retreat According to the Doctrine and Method of St. Ignatius".

We must add also articles published from time to time in the Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and a fairly considerable number of writings published for different occasions, as also many others found amongst his papers. Then we must note that Father Chevalier never had a secretary to help him either with his personal correspondence, which was considerable, or with his other writings.

We can judge by this the sum of labours which he supported during his long career. Though the weight of years and of cruel infirmities ruined his bodily strength, his intellect lost nothing of its vigor or its early activity. His last works prove this. They are the fruits of his extreme old age. As he prepared with touching humility and unshakeable confidence in the Divine Mercy, to render an account to the Sovereign Judge, he practised to the letter the counsel of the "Imitation": "Never be idle, but be occupied either in reading, writing, praying, meditating or doing some useful work for the common good."

Such was the venerated Father right to the last moment for the glory of the Heart of Jesus and the good of souls.

CHAPTER 10

To complete what we have said of Father Chevalier's love for the Sacred Heart and his constant zeal to spread this devotion everywhere, we recount here an audience which he received with Pius IX in 1847. We take this recital, in an abridged form, from the Annals of July, 1847.

At the beginning of May he was in Rome with two of his confreres, Father Vandel and Father Jouet.

On the 5th May, the feast of Pius IX, they took part in an audience granted to the delegates of the pilgrimages who had come with good wishes for the Holy Father on this occasion. Father Chevalier was commissioned to represent the Archbishop of Bourges and his diocese; his two confreres came in the name of the universal Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

But, as Father Founder had come also to beg various favours, and especially the approbation of his Congregation, he had asked for a private audience. The Holy Father was indisposed, so a month passed by before he could obtain it. This was a month of continuous prayer addressed to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. The longed-for day arrived at last, the audience having been granted for the 3rd June.

At the hour indicated, they were introduced.

"The Holy Father was seated at his desk," says the narrator, "his face smiling."

"Come in, come in, my children," he said, seeing that we dared not advance for fear of interrupting his work. "The poor Pope has always something to do but it is finished now."

We fell on our knees. "Most Holy Father," said Father Chevalier, "it is your children, your Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and with profound homage, we offer you this Statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and that which it encloses." And he presented a beautiful statue of silvered bronze, attached to which was an offering for Peter's Pence, a generous gift of the Associates of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The Pope had the statue placed on his desk and warmly thanked Father Chevalier and all those who had contributed to this offering.

Father Chevalier continued, "Most Holy Father, in 1860, you deigned to bless our little Congregation. You said you would be happy to give it the canonical approbation yourself. Five years ago, your words received a first accomplishment. You gave the first approbation.

Now we come to ask you for the definitive approbation of our little Society. Headed by the Archbishop of Bourges, we have letters from 62 Bishops, who also ask this favour."

"Have you all these letters?" asked the Pope.

"Yes, Most Holy Father. We gave them to the Secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars."

"To Monsignor Vittelleschi? Very well, I will see them tomorrow. I will speak to him and hasten the matter."

Pius IX kept his word so well that before the end of the month, by a delicate attention, he signed the definitive decree of approbation on the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

However, the Sovereign Pontiff noticed the picture which one of the Missionaries was carrying and asked for an explanation. Father Chevalier replied, "Most Holy Father, two years ago we had the happiness of kneeling at your feet and presenting a request which Your Holiness deigned to grant."

"And what was this request?"

"Most Holy Father, it is written on this picture, with the words which You deigned to add. We beg Your Holiness to ratify this act by placing Your signature on the picture."

"Read what is written on the picture," said the Pope.

Father Chevalier took the picture and read the following:

"Most Holy Father, Jules Chevalier, priest of the Diocese of Bourges, and Superior of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, humbly prostrate at Your Holiness' Feet, begs the following favour:

That Your Holiness, Who has deigned to bless, encourage and approve our little religious Society, born at Issoudun, on the very day of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, 1854, would deign to accept the complete donation which this humble Congregation makes to You of all its members and all its works as Your own property; regarding You as its Founder and personal superior. And in virtue of this title which imposes on us the happy obligation of being always more devoted to your cause, which is the very cause of Jesus Christ, we beg the right of sharing in all your merits and prayers, both for ourselves and those who will come after us in this Congregation.

Deign, Most Holy Father, to ratify by Your signature this desire of Your children."

"That is very good," exclaimed the Pope, who, during the reading had made signs of assent to all that was said, "Yes, yes, I will do what you desire."

And the holy old man wrote under this petition, "May God bless, direct and enlighten you. Pius IX."

After having placed his signature on the picture, the Pope spoke to his visitors with touching familiarity and simplicity, just like a Father

with his children. The three Missionaries listened to the venerable Pontiff speaking to them of the Heart of Jesus with so much unction that they could not restrain their emotion. Suddenly, without any suggestion from his listeners, Pius IX said, "You asked me before to consecrate the Church to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and I did not then think that the time was opportune: but to-day if good Catholics ask it, I will do it willingly. We must respond to the devotion of the faithful. The Sacred Heart must exercise His sovereign royalty over the world." (1)

After citing the words of the Holy Father, the chronicler added: These words of the Vicar of Christ fell on our hearts like oil on flames: Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, having for motto at every instant, 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved,' what greater joy could the Holy Father give us then to speak in this manner!"

At the end of this audience, Father Chevalier and his confreres had the consolation of renewing their vows at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff. When they came out they discussed what they should do to respond to the Pope's desire. The deliberations were short and all three were consumed with the same flame of love for the Sacred Heart, animated by the same zeal for His glory. They concluded without any hesitation that as Pius IX had with such goodness declared himself the immediate and personal Superior of the Congregation, his desire so clearly expressed imposed a duty upon them. And on the other hand, never perhaps would they find a more favourable occasion of working for the glory of the Heart of Jesus than by devoting themselves with ardour to obtain that the Church and the world be consecrated to It by Pius IX. They resolved, then, to neglect nothing, to attempt even the impossible, to achieve this result.

Meantime, a petition was drawn up. It was first published in the Annals, then separately and addressed to all the promoters of the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart throughout the world.

Under the powerful protection of our Mother, the petition was received everywhere with joy. The speed with which our Associates responded to the Holy Father's desire was most extraordinary.

Six months had scarcely passed before Father Chevalier was again on his way to Rome, taking with him a large folio volume of letters from 60 Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of France, Italy, Spain, Holland, Austria, Belgium, Canada and other countries; requests from mitred abbots, and superiors general of a great number of religious Orders and Congregations; and 28 volumes of petitions signed by the faithful. Each contained 100,000 signatures, making a total of 2,800,000 requests. A short time after, two other similar volumes were sent from Issoudun. This brought the number of signatures to 3,000,000.

(1) In 1870, during the Vatican Council, Father Chevalier had addressed to the Holy Father a petition accompanied by 15,000 signatures, asking that the world be consecrated to the Sacred Heart. Pere Ramiere, in the Messenger of the Sacred Heart, had directed the movement.

Father Chevalier also bore a letter from the Archbishop of Bourges. This letter gave Pius IX interesting details about the prodigious rapidity with which these signatures had been collected.

We quote here a passage from this letter and also one from the reply of Pius IX:

"These petitions include 153 letters from bishops, asking for this consecration, and 2,800,000 signatures of the faithful in 28 volumes. All these petitions have been collected by the zeal and care of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, established at Issoudun. We are happy to recall that Your Holiness, in the month of June last, graciously deigned to receive in private audience, Rev. Father Jules Chevalier, Superior of these same Missionaries, and two other members of his Congregation, and You paternally exhorted them to solicit the faithful to ask for this Consecration.

These Fathers accepted with joy this glorious mission. They began immediately, and with absolute devotedness have neglected nothing to succeed in this noble enterprise. The Divine Heart of Jesus blessed their efforts so well that in the space of a few months they had collected these signatures."

Replying on the 10th February following, Pius IX said:

"Together with your most respectful letter written before Christmas, we received the 28 volumes containing the petitions of bishops and faithful that the universal Church be consecrated to the glory of the Sacred Heart of our Divine Redeemer We have transmitted these petitions to the Sacred Congregation of Rites to whom it pertains to treat of these affairs with the care and reflection they merit."

The zeal here displayed by Father Chevalier and his confreres confirms what was said at the beginning of this book. It shows his habitual disposition whenever it was a question of the glory of the Heart of Jesus.

CHAPTER 11.

The Parish of Issoudun. The Archpriest - his Works.

In 1872 there was a vacancy for the office of parish priest of Issoudun. For various reasons, the Archbishop of Bourges wanted to confide its administration to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Father Chevalier likewise was convinced that if the parish was served by the Congregation it would be an advantage both for the Congregation: for the parish, because in spite of the devotedness and zeal of the archpriest and his vicars, it suffered from the lack of sufficient priests: and for the Congregation, which would find in it an easy means of training its young religious in apostolic works.

The Archbishop, who had followed with attention and great anxiety the irreligious movement which was sweeping over France, advised Father Chevalier, "Accept the direction of the parish. It will be a safeguard for your community of Issoudun." This was found to be true during the expulsions of 1880.

Nevertheless, thinking that he should give all his care to his newly-formed Congregation, Father Chevalier did not want to take charge of the administration of the parish himself. He resolved, therefore, to confide it to one of his religious. The latter, however, declared that he could not accept such a grave responsibility. His conscience, he said, imposed on him the obligation of refusing. Nothing could shake his resolution.

Not knowing what to do, Father Chevalier consulted the Archbishop, who counselled him to take upon himself this heavy charge, and to count upon the help of grace. Humbly he submitted to the decision of his Archbishop, and became Archpriest of Issoudun. His labours, already excessive, were considerably increased, but with his indefatigable activity, he consecrated himself with new ardour to the works of his ministry. Only God knows the sum total of his zeal and devotedness for the souls confided to him. He was 48. For nineteen years already he had lived in the parish where he was to finish his long career. Hence, none better than he, knew the people whose pastor he had become. Also, to aid him in this task, he had the members of the Community of which he was Superior.

His first resolution was to reconstruct a portion of the parish church. This had been desired for many years, both by the ecclesiastical authority, and by the people. But it was an enterprise bristling with difficulties which had appeared insurmountable to his predecessors. For many years he studied and worked out his project and when he thought the moment had come he undertook the work with courage and prudence. He could not execute fully the plans he had conceived, but this was not his fault. If there had been an intelligent municipal administration which considered the interests of the commune, he could easily have overcome the other problems, but this was the beginning of the era of religious persecution which overwhelmed our unfortunate country with ruins. The civil authorities of Issoudun listened more readily to the counsels of anti-religious passion than to those of common sense and reason. They opposed the grand and generous project of their Archpriest.

Hence, the facade with its two towers could not be constructed. Nevertheless, except for this omission, the building is finished. Its vast proportions, the harmony of its parts, its purity of line make it a remarkable religious edifice which lends itself admirably to the great solemnities of Catholic worship.

Before all else, Father Chevalier was concerned about organising the parochial ministry. He considered that the religious instruction of children was one of his most important duties, so his first care was to arrange the children for catechism in sections according to their age, aptitude or

needs. Each section was confided to the care of either one of the curates or a member of his Community. In spite of his many occupations, Father Chevalier undertook to teach one section himself and he persevered in this duty to his extreme old age. Truly it was a beautiful and touching sight to see this old, white-haired priest, worn out by excessive work and suffering, explaining the elements of religion to these children. Only illness or some unforeseen hindrance ever prevented him from accomplishing this duty.

This measure produced excellent fruits. More than once, when the Archbishop of Bourges came to administer Confirmation, he congratulated the catechists of Issoudun on the children's religious knowledge and their good behaviour.

Father Founder was convinced that the reform of a parish must commence with the Christian formation of the children, and he was distressed to see that on account of the old arrangement of the two parts of the church, the children occupied a place where it was difficult for them to fix their attention on the ceremonies. To remedy this inconvenience he resolved to have a special Children's Mass and in the evening special short devotions. During the Mass the children sang hymns and in the evening a few psalms of Vespers of the Blessed Virgin followed by the "Ave Maris Stella" and the "Magnificat."

Of the Confraternities formerly established in the parish, many were almost forgotten, and those which were kept up were only a sort of pious routine. The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament was one of these.

Father Chevalier judged that an Archconfraternity, having as its special aim the honouring of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, ought to help give greater solemnity to functions in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. So he divided the Association into two sections - the men and the women. The men were to form a guard of honour and carry lighted tapers before the Blessed Sacrament during processions. The ladies took charge of the linen and altar decorations. Each section had a special rule and a president, and meetings were held separately. But for all their duties, the Association was governed by its former statutes and placed under the spiritual direction of the curate in charge. Under these new arrangements the Confraternity flourished once more. In a short time all the more devout persons joined its ranks, and the Association rendered real services to the parish. When Father Chevalier had taken charge of the parish, the sacristy was poorly furnished and the altar linen and vestments almost unfit to use, but soon, under the care of the active and devoted workers of the Blessed Sacrament Confraternity it could compare favourably with the richest and best cared-for sacristies of the diocese. Thus Father Founder gave to the parish of Issoudun, a large and beautiful church, a new sacristy, and all that could contribute to the splendour of divine worship.

The curates, whose number had been doubled by the zealous pastor, shared his immense task. Each, according to his aptitudes, had his apportioned work to which he applied himself with zeal and devotedness. If they took part in the labours, they must also share in the praise for the work.

However, Father Chevalier, who knew the needs of his parish, did not concentrate his efforts on a few particular workers. His zeal urged him to devote himself to all who could contribute to the spiritual or temporal welfare of his parish. If any existing work was prosperous, he wished nothing to be left undone that it might continue to develop. He did this for the Archconfraternity of the Holy Rosary which he confided to one of his curates. If he met with circumstances favourable for founding new works, he neglected no sacrifice to establish them on solid basis. In this way he erected the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul to visit poor families; the work of the ladies of Charity; etc.

Seeing with regret that a great number of service girls found it very difficult to persevere in the practice of their religious duties, he founded the Association of Servants, under the title of St. Blandina. The Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul were placed in charge of this. Each month the curate appointed to the charge celebrated a special Mass for them and gave an exhortation. Every year at Easter, they were provided with a Retreat to renew their fervour and prepare them for their Paschal Communion.

Added to the preaching of Annual Retreats, there were Sunday sermons; monthly instructions to the various Associations and one each Thursday at the Mass of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart; the exercises in preparation for the great feasts of the Congregation; then there were the sermons at the Stations of the Cross during Lent and those during the months of May and the Sacred Heart; the instructions given to the children from the catechism of perseverance, and other occasional sermons several times a year. So it is easy to see Father Chevalier's interest in the religious instruction of his parishioners. We are sure that there are few parishes where the seed of the Word of God has been sown with more abundance than in Issoudun.

Certainly, Father Chevalier found amongst the members of his Congregation many helpers in his immense work, but often also he called in either secular or religious preachers for the sermons of Lent, or for the month of May etc. He also had a large mission in his parish in 1887.

To all these works of zeal he added that of voluntary catechists whom he organised and who functioned admirably for many years. He was already on his deathbed when he had this latter work erected into a confraternity, canonically instituted, and affiliated to the Archconfraternity of the same name in Paris. There were also the Christian schools for boys and girls, patronages, the work for soldiers who had their chapel and special devotions each Sunday, and as well an annual retreat, the publication of a parish bulletin, the foundation of a religious house of nurses devoted entirely to the free service of the poor, and many other works.

Such was Father Chevalier in his parochial ministry in a town where the greater number of persons had been long since hostile to religion.

CHAPTER 12.

The Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was the primary work of Father Chevalier. He himself was firmly convinced of this. Neither his great work, nor his long and painful sufferings, nor the many trials which surged upon him could turn his thoughts away from his Congregation. After his love for the Sacred Heart and for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, this love occupied the first place in his affections.

The foundation of a religious Congregation is not an ordinary work, depending on the will of man, and which can be undertaken or not according to his desires - like the construction of a monument, the exploitation of a property, or any other operation left to the free choice of natural genius.

The founder must receive his mission from on high. It is said to him as to Moses, "Look and form according to the pattern shown thee!" On his fidelity in corresponding to the lights of the Holy Spirit depends the success or failure of his enterprise. Hence it follows that if a religious family does not wish to perish it must preserve lovingly the spirit it has received from its founder; history, alas! furnishes many proofs of this. Father Chevalier was truly the one elected of God to found the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. All that we have seen so far of his life, - it is our intimate conviction - shows this clearly. Yes, all! His humble origin, his childhood, his first steps towards the priesthood, the works of his ministry have unveiled for us the adorable action of Providence, leading him as by the hand, towards the place chosen in the designs of Eternal Mercy, there to establish the work for which he was predestined. The other great works accomplished by this ardent apostle, after he had laid the foundations - so very humble - of his Congregation were but the complement of the divine plan shown to our Father. They were willed by God, as was the Congregation itself. Otherwise how could they have budded and blossomed on a stem so frail that it could not supply them the sap necessary for life?

For example, with regard to the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, how could we explain its prodigious and rapid extension throughout the whole world, its well-nigh irresistible attraction drawing souls on pilgrimage, if we do not recognise the providential action of the Heart of Jesus. More than anyone else, Father Chevalier realised this. Often we heard him reply to compliments which he disliked extremely, "Man is nothing. Let us give glory to God, for He had done everything."

However, the Congregation was slowly developing. Father Chevalier, as we saw, commenced his work with one sole confrere who, to his great sorrow was soon taken away. Another came and will remain his sole companion for several years. It was only after the erection of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in 1864, ten years after its first beginning that the Community saw its members increase. Whence came this apparent sterility which disconcerted several whom it halted when on the very threshold of entering the Congregation.

We reply that Providence has its hour determined by Eternal Wisdom for the full flowering of its works. It is like the seed cast into the soil, which lies buried for a long time, long or short according to the laws of nature and the circumstances which can retard or hasten its germination.

The venerated Father waited patiently for this hour of Providence, and was not troubled by the delay. He had the assurance that God wanted the Congregation, and his confidence was not shaken by trials. Had he not for Protectress the incomparable Treasurer of the Heart of Jesus? Would this good Mother, Who up till then had done all in the Congregation, abandon him? The holy Founder did not think so. He would have thought himself of the blackest ingratitude towards his Heavenly Benefactress if he had allowed his soul to entertain the least doubt in this matter.

What, in fact, was the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart when the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was confided to it? A very frail plant, whose roots could not absorb the necessary moisture for its growth! What did the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart do for it? The Archconfraternity produced on the Congregation the effects of a vigorous and fruitful graft. It infused into it a more intense life and soon the tree began to bear abundant fruit.

Thus, in the plans of Providence, everything harmonises into a wonderful manner; power and weakness; sovereign greatness and nothingness; the work of God and the co-operation of the will of man.

Our Lord, Whose Heart desires more than ever to be glorified and loved by all the world: Ubique terrarum, has confided to His beloved Mother the care of conducting the little Society towards its high and noble end - of strengthening its weakness, of protecting it, defending it against its numerous enemies and assisting it in all its difficulties.

We say with gratitude that the whole development of the Congregation is due to the protection of the Immaculate Mother of God, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In the midst of unending difficulties, it seemed as if it must perish like the seed sown amongst thorns. After twenty years (1874), it counted only three houses - Issoudun, its birthplace; Chezal-Benoit, the Apostolic School and the Novitiate at St. Gerand-le-Puy in the diocese of Moulins. But what is twenty years in the life of a Congregation? Does not the complete formation of man, according to nature's laws, exact a longer time still?

Father Chevalier who, right from the beginning had the intimate conviction that one day the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart would spread to the limits of the world, certainly suffered to see the work hindered in so many ways, but his courage and confidence were unshaken. In spite of his natural ardour, in spite of his intense desire to multiply the number of workers for the Gospel, he remained humbly abandoned to the adorable designs of Providence, and waited calmly for the hour marked by Divine Wisdom.

This hour was to come at last. But how numerous were the trials that came with

This hour was to come at last. But how numerous were the trials that came with it! The works of God, we all know, arise and develop on Calvary, in the shadow of the Cross. This is a general law to which the Father Founder was largely submitted. Each degree of progress in his work was announced and prepared for by trial, or else followed by one, like the storm which only serves to strengthen and more deeply enroot the young plant. In such a short account, we cannot enter into details of the many and varied sufferings supported by Father Chevalier; still we must select a few to show the Divine action in the foundation of our Congregation.

Already, in describing the Feast of the Crowning of the Statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, we spoke of the painful trial which changed this feast of joy and triumph into a day of painful anguish for Father Chevalier. From this arose a series of other trials still more painful, and they were prolonged for many years.

In 1872, a Confraternity in honour of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had been formed in Rome by a committee composed of priests and laity. First it had its centre in the Church of St. Andrew of the Quirinal, then in the Church of St. Venantius, and finally in that of St. Andrew. This Confraternity was welcomed by the Roman people. It developed rapidly. When Father Chevalier heard of the homage rendered to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the Eternal City, he experienced great joy, but, alas! it was of short duration. During the first year the relations with the centre of devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart were just as they should be, deferential and cordial. But soon all changed.

The Association, first of all, under the pretext that the statue of Issoudun was not conformed to the usages of Roman piety in representing Our Lady, refused to accept it. They chose another model, the well-known image of Our Lady of Overbeck - very beautiful in itself, but having no connection at all with the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In order to adapt it to the new title, they thought it sufficient to paint a heart on the breast of the Infant Jesus, with this inscription beneath: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us.

The following year (August 1873), the Association applied for and obtained the erection of a universal Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. This was the beginning of inextricable difficulties. The Director of the Association thought it had the right to regulate all that concerned devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, without any regard for the legitimate rights of the Association established in the Basilica of Issoudun, and of which Father Chevalier incontestably was the Founder and Director. Moreover, he wanted the image which he had adopted to be the only one propagated by the various Confraternities. This was calculated to destroy the whole work of Father Chevalier, and according to an expression which we find in his notes, "to submit the mother to the exigencies of the daughter" - that is the Association of Issoudun to the Roman Association.

A short time after, a reply addressed by His Eminence, Cardinal Patrizi (28th February, 1875), and the Bishop of Prismsil in Galicia, on the

subject of a counterfeit of the Statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, of Issoudun, was made public. In a few days it was known wherever the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was held in honour. Unfortunately, the majority of the material published about it only gave a few isolated extracts from the context. Those detached phrases gave a false impression of the Cardinal's words. The editors added commentaries more or less exaggerated, and many displayed a complete ignorance of the question, and at least a doubtful goodwill. Some even went to the extent of saying that the Holy See had condemned the image of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun, crowned in the name of Pius IX, and that it disapproved of the entire Association.

All the noise made by the religious papers on the occasion of this response, caused great trouble amongst the many Associates of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Father Chevalier had received no official communication about this letter, and knew of it only from the extracts given in the papers, hence he was greatly troubled - the more so in that he did not know the motives actuating the Holy See in this matter, nor the extent of its proscriptions. With great anxiety, he tried to decide what measures he should take to obey the orders of the Holy Office. This anxiety lasted for two long months.

At last, on 1st May of the same year, 1875, the Archbishop of Bourges, having consulted the Holy See, wrote him the following letter:

Bourges, 1st May, 1875.

My dear Father,

I am happy to be able to reassure you completely on the matter of the reply made lately by His Eminence Cardinal Patrizi to the Bishop of Prismsil in Galicia. This letter, published in the papers, with commentaries, more or less exact, has caused a great stir. It was imagined that the Holy See had disapproved of the Statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun. Happily, these fears are groundless.

By a special letter, Cardinal Patrizi has informed me that in the reply addressed to the Bishop of Prismsil, there was not one word about the form of the statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart venerated at Issoudun. Hence it was false to conclude that it was disapproved of by the Holy See. What the Holy Father wished was that, in future, the statues and pictures of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, destined for public worship, be modified in such a way as to avoid certain abuses which have arisen in some countries. The numerous associates of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart can therefore be reassured. The beautiful statue of Issoudun, which in 1869 was crowned in the name of the Holy Father, will remain in its venerated sanctuary."

The archbishop ended his letter by congratulating Father Chevalier on having forestalled the desires of the Supreme Pontiff by presenting for his approbation a new type of image of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, which henceforth would be the only one reproduced. This new model is well known to the readers of the Annals, since they see it on the cover of each instalment. The Archconfraternity recognises no other.

As for the statue which surmounts the altar of the pilgrim Chapel at Issoudun, not only was Father Chevalier authorised to keep it, but in a consultation with the Holy Office, he was told formally, "You must not change it." And the same reply was given to us on another occasion when we asked the question in the name of Father Chevalier.

These difficulties which we have briefly explained, and others also afflicted him deeply. Although he still saw no means of recovering his rights over the universal Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, of which the Roman Association had disposed him, he did not lose confidence. Had he not on his side the Advocate of difficult and hopeless cases? He rested under the powerful protection of Her who had never failed him. He prayed and asked others to pray.

In the meantime some devoted friends, well aware of his difficulties and the customs of Rome, advised him to establish there a Procurator General responsible for the affairs of the Congregation, and also to found in Rome a house with a Chapel open to the public.

This was a light for him, and a response from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER 13.

In the last months of 1875, Pere Jouet set out for Rome under the title of Procurator General, and with the mission of looking for a suitable house for the proposed foundation. Always attentive to the needs of those who trust in it, Divine Providence brought the new Procurator into contact with the former Abbot of La Trappe of Staoueli, in Algeria, and for many years Procurator General of his Order. Father Francis Regis was his name, a man of wide experience and good judgement, and having extensive influence with the Roman Congregations. Moreover, his charity made him always happy to render a service. He was a great help to Father Jouet, who consulted him in all his difficulties. At his request, Father Francis Regis even consented to rent to him provisionally, part of a large house which he occupied in the street of St. John Latran, in order to house the little colony of young religious which the Father Founder had resolved to send to complete their studies in Rome.

Here was established, in extreme poverty and suffering, the residence of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in the Eternal City. It was situated between the Colosseum and the Basilica of St. John, two monuments recalling glorious and heroic pages in the Church's history. Would it be temerity to see in this a presage of what awaited the humble infant Community? However that may be, the foundation was a step towards the solution of the grave difficulties which afflicted Father Founder. He saw in it the dawn of better days. But the trouble was to be prolonged for many years yet. And to it were to be added three other trials, arising in three successive years.

On the first Thursday of May, 1877, Father Vandel whom we loved to call, with affectionate respect, holy Father Vandel, exchanged the sorrows of this earth for the joys of the eternal homeland. None better than Father Chevalier had known and appreciated the great qualities and eminent virtues of this model religious whose passing left so great a void in our midst; nor was anyone more keenly affected by his death.

On the 7th February, 1878, loaded with years and merits, Pope Pius IX died at Rome. He had occupied the chair of Peter for 31 years. His Pontificate was the longest and most glorious recorded by history since that of St. Peter.

Father Chevalier had a deep affection for this holy Pontiff, who had blessed and encouraged his work right from the first years, and had loaded it with favours. As we have seen, he had regarded himself as its founder and personal superior. His death was a keen sorrow for Father Chevalier.

Finally, on the 17th October, 1878, Monsignor de la Tour d'Auvergne, the zealous and holy Archbishop of Bourges went to receive the reward of his great labours. In him Father Chevalier lost a prudent counsellor, a devoted protector, and an affectionate father, and the firm support of his Congregation, in which the venerable prelate was as much interested as if it had been his own work. Of these three great trials, he felt this latter most deeply, and for a time he was unable to surmount his sorrow. Right to his last years, when he spoke of this great benefactor, his emotions betrayed itself in the tone of his voice. His affection for this venerable Archbishop was that of a son for his father. At no moment of his life have we seen him shed tears as freely as he did over the mortal remains of this beloved friend.

These trials, far from relaxing his ardour, made him yet more generous and energetic. Feeling that he had less support on earth, he placed a firmer confidence in the protection of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. As Job, he loved to say, "God gave these supports to my weakness, He has taken them away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Leo XIII, elected on the 20th February, succeeded Pius IX on the Chair of Peter. As Bishop and Cardinal, he already knew and loved the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and, elected Supreme Pontiff, he did not forget the ineffable Treasurer of the Heart of Jesus. Our Divine Mother wished to give us another proof of her maternal solicitude, through the intermediary of this great Pontiff.

In the midst of the innumerable and important affairs of the government of the Church, there was one which, in spite of its secondary importance, occupied the thought of the Pope and saddened him. The celebrated Church of St. James of the Spaniards, so rich in historic and religious memories, and formerly renowned in Rome for the many works of art of which it contained, was falling into ruins. Despoiled of its precious treasures, it had become the common depot for the merchants of that area, and the workshop of a few artisans. We visited it at that time and were profoundly saddened to discover in the midst of the dust and old plaster, the

debris of artistic ornamentations which testified to the former splendour of the place. The High Altar, a remarkable work by Bramante, served as support for the bench of a carpenter who cared little about saving this work of art from destruction. Here and there on the walls were ruins of paintings and sculptures, bespeaking the negligence of the guardians of this monument which, for centuries, had been one of the glories of Spain.

Now, at the time of Leo XIII's election, this old church was put up for public auction. The municipal administration wanted to purchase it to transform it into a public market or even a theatre, and the Protestants wanted it for a church.

The Pope earnestly desired to preserve these sacred ruins from profanation. But, a prisoner of the Revolution, shut up in the Vatican without any authority over the administration of Rome, how could he realise his desire? However, if the Sovereign Pontiff to his deep regret had no power in this matter, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had not lost hers. She wished to establish Her throne over these ruins, and open an inexhaustible source of graces in this restored sanctuary. Let us see how Her merciful designs were realised.

Leo XIII had learnt that the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were provisionally installed with the Trappists in the Street of St. John Lateran, and were looking for a house with a church attached.

On the 25th May - we remark the date, as there was then being made in the basilica of Issoudun, the novena in preparation for the Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart - on this 25th May, the Pope was discussing the matter of this Church of St. James of the Spaniards with his Secretary of State, Cardinal Franchi, and seeking the means of saving it from desecration and ruin. His Holiness then thought of proposing the purchase to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and of promising his co-operation. This sudden thought pleased him. On the following day he sent Monsignor Folchi, to make this proposition to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The same day, these latter transmitted it by telegram to Father Chevalier at Issoudun. When the telegram arrived, Father Chevalier and his assistants were united in Council to deliberate on the affairs of the Congregation. On reading the telegram, Father Chevalier was deeply moved. He communicated its contents to his assistants who like him, were filled with gratitude. Was not this a feast-day gift from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart - a response to their prayers? After a fervent act of thanksgiving to our Heavenly Protectress, Father Chevalier asked what reply they should make to the Sovereign Pontiff. All thought that the matter of such importance could not be decided until they knew the conditions which would be imposed and the expenses which would result for the Congregation. So they resolved to send to Rome the Procurator General and two other Counsellors to make investigations. Their report was favourable, and it was decided to accept the Holy Father's proposal.

Father Chevalier drew up a reply to the Holy Father and sent the letter to the Archbishop of Bourges, who wrote himself, and had these two letters sent by his private secretary, then in Rome.

One reads with interest the happy impression made on Leo XIII by these two letters. We find it expressed in a letter of the devoted secretary to Father Chevalier dated 30th June. It reads, "Yesterday, Feast of St. Peter, I had the honour of an audience with the Holy Father. I did not intend to speak to the Sovereign Pontiff of our affairs. I merely intended to ask for a final blessing before returning to France.

On seeing me, the Holy Father said spontaneously, 'I saw, this morning, your letter and the despatches from the Bishop of Bourges and Father Chevalier. I am pleased about their decision. It is a great joy to me to know that this Church of St. James is not only saved from profanation, but restored to worship and will become a sanctuary dedicated to the Sacred Heart. I am very pleased. Tell that to Father Chevalier. We will discuss the matter further with him.' Then the Holy Father asked, 'Are you coming back?' I replied, 'Most Holy Father, Father Chevalier has given full powers to the Procurator General of the Society. He will be present at the auction sale on the 12th July, and will make the purchase.' 'Ah! very good. God will bless the enterprise and we will arrange with Father Chevalier about the means of executing it.'"

On the 16th July the Church of St. James was bought in the name of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Ten days after, on the 26th, Father Chevalier came to sign the official act of sale, and was received in private audience by Leo XIII. The Pope expressed his joy that the question was settled so favourably and congratulated Father Chevalier on his courage and devotedness. Then for half an hour, he questioned him familiarly and with paternal kindness about the origin of the Congregation, its end and its works; about the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, its rapid spread and the many graces granted by the ineffable Treasurer of the Sacred Heart; on the beautiful statue of Issoudun, crowned by the Archbishop of Bourges in the name of Pius IX, and in a word, on all that concerned the little Congregation. Leo XIII listened with interest to Father Chevalier's account, and blessed his work with tender and paternal affection.

A few days after, on the 31st, the contract was signed. The narrator of this memorable audience terminates his recital with these words of gratitude, "Let us thank Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, for it is She who has prepared all and done all. She will bring to success that which She has begun." And we also can say today with gratitude, "Let us thank Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, who has so mercifully completed Her work in spite of all the obstacles put in its way by the spirit of evil. She has shown Herself once more to be the Advocate of difficult and hopeless cases."

Thanks to the support of the Sovereign Pontiff, thanks above all to the advance which he made to Father Chevalier, lending him half the sum necessary for the purchase, the Church of St. James was henceforth preserv-

ed from profanation. This was a first step forward, but it was only a step. If it was decisive, it nevertheless did nothing to relieve the great difficulties of the future. Father Chevalier had considered these difficulties and without being disconcerted, he set himself resolutely to the work. It appeared as if a superior power guided him, and that he had received the assurance of success. During the few days spent in Rome, he consulted expert architects and builders, and decided which parts of the work should be undertaken immediately, and which could be delayed until later on.

However, there arose a problem which demanded immediate solution. Father Chevalier had to find a place to lodge the Community which would be in charge of the Church, and a group of young religious who had already commenced their theology course. The old monument of St. James covered a large rectangle, and outside its walls there was not the smallest portion of free land. A whole series of big high buildings given over to Commerce or serving as tenement houses gave the impression of wanting to crowd out the church rather than being prepared to welcome a religious community. Moreover, these buildings all belonged to Spain, and the administrator, who derived a large revenue from them, was not prepared to alter their purpose.

Father Chevalier decided that, as he could not build in the ground, he would put a second storey on the Church. The architect considered the project possible. The Holy See granted the necessary permissions, so the workers were able to commence immediately, and within a year the building was able to be used. The reconstructions included the two facades, that opening on the Place Navone, and the principal one opening on the Rue de la Sapience. The monastery rested like the nest of an eagle on the vaults of the Church and one of the three naves was ready to be opened to the faithful.

On the 23rd May, 1879, there arrived at Issoudun a telegram addressed to the Director of the Annals, announcing the inauguration of the Church and its dedication to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In its brevity, this telegram is a song of triumph and gratitude. We transcribe it without comment:

"Splendid ceremony, presided over by His Eminence, the Cardinal-Vicar. Large concourse of prelates, dignitaries and faithful. Monsignor Mermillod preached this evening. Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for the whole world installed in our church and confided to our direction. Pontifical decree given us will be published. Further details soon.

Signed J. Chevalier."

The trials had produced their fruits, and now counselling for Father Chevalier. In all these happenings we can follow the powerful action of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, preparing for Her devoted apostle and his Congregation a foundation in Rome under the most favourable conditions. She wanted to possess in the Eternal City a sanctuary where she would be specially honoured; where Her Archconfraternity, officially and entirely

confided by the Sovereign Pontiff to the care and direction of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Issoudun could, without arousing any dispute, extend to the whole world its blest influence.

In his notes, Father Chevalier concludes the recital of these incidents with the following reflection: "Thus God knows how to draw good out of evil, and to turn all things to His glory. Were it not for all these difficulties, we would probably not yet be established in Rome in a large house, with a procure, a scholasticate, and an apostolic school." And a little further on he adds: "We had scarcely emerged from these troubles when others arose. It is very necessary for the works of God to be tested."

The new trials to which the venerated Father refers are the expulsions of 1880. On the 5th November of that fatal year he had the sorrow of seeing, in one single day, all his religious in France ejected from their houses by the police, the gendarmerie and armed forces. Contemptible seals were placed on the doors of the Basilica of Issoudun and the chapels of the other houses as though on infamous places which people were forbidden to enter. The religious, driven from their peaceful dwellings like vile and dangerous criminals, had to pass through ranks of soldiers. But these latter were often ashamed of being employed in this sorrowful task, and showed the Fathers testimonies of their respect and sympathy. This violent assault against the ramparts of the Church in France was the first attempt at open persecution. And according to the Hypercritical and cunning method of the Masonic Lodges, they did not in this first onslaught attack all the Religious Orders. They made a fairly clever selection, in order not to frighten the more honourable section of the people and so stir up a formidable reaction.

The little Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, which had barely commenced to develop, was included in this first attack. It was for it an honour to be judged worthy to face the rage of persecution and suffer for the Name of Jesus. Humanly speaking, this trial would have encompassed its ruin; it was still so weak and frail. What was Father Chevalier to do in these circumstances?

On the first news of the persecution, he had calmly measured the extent of the danger. Then, more confident than ever in the future of the Congregation, he sought a refuge for those of his confreres who would be exiled from France. "If God tries us," he said then, "it is for His glory and our good. Let us place all our confidence in Him alone; He will not let us perish." This was true. His trusting abandonment to Providence drew on the Congregation the blessings of heaven and, instead of harming it, the persecutions merely hastened its development.

Nevertheless, confidence in God does not dispense us from the duty of co-operating with His divine action. Father Chevalier had foreseen all. Before the fatal day, he had made known to each one the refuge prepared for him.

Many good families of Issoudun had offered him rooms for his expelled religious. He had accepted them with deep gratitude. These houses became provisionally the refuge of those brother priests whom he desired to keep with him to continue their work.

The boys of the Apostolic School, banished from their peaceful solitude of Chez-el-Benoit, were brought to Issoudun. They were divided into several groups and lodged in different parts of the town where sleeping quarters had been prepared for them. During the day they came together for their spiritual exercises and classes in buildings hard by the Community and arranged for this purpose. Thanks to the devotedness of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, their meals were for them prepared in quarters that were easy of access.

This arrangement enabled our boys to continue their studies. Certainly it entailed great sacrifices, but thanks to the devotedness of the professors and the goodwill of the pupils, these years were as fruitful as the most peaceful ones of the past. The director of that time says that he had never found more application or generosity than in those days of persecution. He attributed this to a special grace from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The young religious who had just completed their novitiate were sent to join the older students in Rome who welcomed them with fraternal affection. Finally, Father Chevalier was able to rent a house in the diocese of Bois-le-Duc, in Holland. It was in the same enclosure as the Major seminary, but completely independent of it. It had been the residence of the former Bishop, but had been unoccupied for several years. The novices were sent there in mid-November, eight days after their expulsion from St. Gerand-le-Puy. Winter had set in and poverty reigned as mistress during the first days. They had nothing. The furnishings recalled the bareness of the stable where the Saviour of the world willed to be born. So they tasted the hardships of exile. It was as a foretaste, a sort of apprenticeship for the missionary life. However, we are happy to say, the sacrifices were considerably lessened by the eager solicitude of the Seminary Directors and by the kindness of many neighbouring families and religious communities. The Superior of the Novitiate and his confreres have not forgotten all these testimonies of kindly interest, nor the many helps received in those difficult days. They retain the most grateful memories of them.

It was a great relief for Father Chevalier to be able to procure a safe refuge for all his religious. As for himself, he remained with his curates in the parish, continuing his works of zeal and devotedness.

The day after the expulsions, the builders employed on the parish Church completed this huge work. This was a wonderful arrangement of Divine Providence, worthy of note. On the following Sunday, Father Chevalier could open for his parishioners the large church just reconstructed. Thanks to this happy circumstance, the faithful did not suffer from the closing of the basilica,

However, the blest image of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart remained under infamous seals. The hundreds of lamps which, night and day, burned silently in the sanctuary went out one by one. No one could pray before Her altar. This was a keen grief to all the servants of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, but how much keener for Father Chevalier, her apostle! To lessen their grief, and to procure for his parishioners and the pilgrims, the help of the ineffable Advocate of difficult and hopeless cases, he had Her statue placed in a chapel of the new Church. The meetings of the Archconfraternity were continued there as in the Basilica. The votive lamps were relighted and the candles sent up their glowing flames towards the throne of the Immaculate Mother of God in petition or as a testimony of gratitude.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart drew souls once more to this sanctuary erected in Her honour. She showed Herself still lavish with the graces she draws from the Heart of Jesus, and as many as ever of her children loved to come to pray before Her image. There was scarcely an hour of the day when there were not some persons before the shrine of this Immaculate Virgin, while no one ever invoked in vain.

Father Chevalier was happy to see the homage rendered to this tenderly loved Mother. He himself was often found kneeling before Her altar, placing all his cares in the merciful Heart of his powerful Protectress. Whenever he could, he offered the Holy Sacrifice at the altar of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It was touching to see him in extreme old age coming at the earliest hour and in all seasons to offer his Mass at the altar of Mary. He ceased this custom only when his tottering steps could no longer support him.

CHAPTER 14.

It was the same with religious persecutions as with other scourges which afflict the earth, leaving wreckage in their wake. Men, the victim of the disaster, needs extraordinary energy and courage to begin again the work thus ruined.

After 25 years of labours in the face of continuous difficulties, and just at the moment when an era of prosperity seemed to be dawning, in one single day, Father Chevalier saw his cherished Congregation threatened with annihilation by the Revolution. His religious were brutally ejected from their monasteries by unjust decrees, and were driven on the road to exile. Certainly, as we have just seen, he took every means in his power to assure to all a shelter against the tempest, but who would come to their aid in a strange land? Who would supply the means necessary for their keep? Did he possess the essential resources for the urgent expenses of

the moment? What hopes had he for the future? Such are the anguished questions which tear at the heart of a father separated from his endangered family.

Father Chevalier probably experienced all this painful disquietude, but never did we hear from his lips one word which could give any suspicion of it, and his writings show no trace of anxiety for the future. He had founded his Congregation on confidence in Him Who gives to the sparrow the little grain that it needs, to the grass of the field the drop of dew necessary for its growth, and never from the first moment had Divine Providence abandoned him. He would have thought himself ungrateful if he had not practised in all simplicity the recommendation of Our Lord to His Apostles: "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body what you shall wear. Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." His wonderful confidence was: **not deceived.**

But though he placed himself entirely in the hands of Providence, both as regards himself and his confreres, he did not forget that foresight must be one of the qualities of a wise Superior, and that it harmonises well with holy abandonment.

Let us look into the work of the prudent Founder.

Before the expulsions, the Congregation counted seven houses: two at Issoudun, the Mother-house which served the Basilica and the presbytery, the residence of the Archpriest and his curates; then Chezal-Benoit, St. Gerand-le-Puy and Arles-en-Provence, a small house founded scarcely six years; and finally the house in Rome and at Watertown, in the United States. This latter, founded in 1877, was still of little importance. In France, the persecution had just closed four of these houses. Only the presbytery of Issoudun had been spared. Father Chevalier resolved to compensate for these ruins as soon as possible by making foundations in other neighbouring countries. A few foundations outside of France would prepare a new field of activity for the zeal of the missionaries, and in case of need would provide houses of refuge. Hence, Father Chevalier determined to commence an establishment in Spain and another in England. These enterprises were not without difficulties, but this did not disconcert the valiant Founder. Thus towards the end of 1880, when the persecution was at its height he set about these foundations which were a great help when the law of 1901 against Religious Congregations was put into full force.

Whilst Father Chevalier was striving to repair the ruins caused by the persecution in France, Adorable Providence was preparing a solace for his apostolic soul. Amongst all the works in which he longed to engage his religious, that of preaching the Gospel to the infidel was one of the dearest to his heart. It is written in the Constitutions: "Our little Society proposes also to spread the faith amongst the infidels. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!"

He used to exhort us ardently to be always "prepared, according to our strength, to exercise all sorts of ministries, in whatever part of the world decided upon by the Sovereign Pontiff or the Superior General." And finally, that none of us might be ignorant of the virtues exacted by the apostolate and the sacrifices it demands, he adds: "That we may accomplish these missions, with success, it is absolutely necessary that those who are sent there be strong in virtue, that they possess an invincible strength of soul, and that they be unshakeably rooted and founded in their vocation. Let them be prepared to suffer all for the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the salvation of souls. Let them be ready to accept hunger, thirst, poverty, perils, persecutions and even death if necessary." (Const. Ch. 11, Art.11.)

Heroic dispositions indeed! They demand high virtue. But they are given by the Holy Spirit to every apostle called by God to this sublime ministry, and if he responds faithfully to his vocation, they develop to such a degree as to be the admiration of angels and of men. Those who read the touching accounts of the missions will be convinced of this.

In tracing so firmly the portrait of an apostle to the infidels, Father Chevalier reveals his own sentiments regarding the Missions, and at the same time his desire to see his Congregation employed in this difficult apostolate. Let us not forget that our Constitutions were written during the first years of the Society, and they had been presented for the approbation of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars at the beginning of 1869, that is to say, nearly twelve years before the immense vicariates of Melanesia and Micronesia were confided to our Society.

Towards the end of March, 1881, a few months after the closing of the French Houses, Father Chevalier received from Rome a letter written in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, and signed by Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of Propaganda:

Rome,
25th March, 1881.

Very Reverend Father,

For many years the Vicariate of New Guinea has been vacant, for lack of a Religious Congregation to take charge of it.

The Holy See is keenly interested in this important country where there is no Catholic mission, and where nevertheless more than Protestant minister is spreading error. Knowing the zeal with which your paternity and the members of your Congregation are animated for the spread of our holy religion, the Holy Father would see with great pleasure the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart take charge of evangelising this vast country. I am not unaware that for the realisation of this great project much time and patience will be necessary.

But for the moment it is only a question of sending a few priests of your Congregation, who would take care of the spiritual interests of the Catholics of the colony of New France, already established there. At the same time, they could seek the means of establishing a mission, and could watch over the rest of the Vicariate which, as I have said, has been vacant for some time.

I have the firm confidence that your Paternity will accept with pleasure the proposition made in this letter."

Yes indeed, Father Chevalier did receive the Cardinal's proposal with immense pleasure. It responded so perfectly to his long-felt hopes. But what an arduous and frightening task this was, offered to the little Congregation, still so weak and in the throes of a frightful persecution! Would it not be unpardonable temerity to accept such a mission, which other Congregations, more powerful and more numerous than ours had been forced to abandon? These reflections and many others were uppermost in the minds of the venerated Father's confreres. As for himself he would have gladly consented to the desires of the Holy See, convinced that this desire came from God Himself, and that despite of the insufficiency of the instruments he deigned to use, Divine Wisdom would know how to succeed. However, in consideration of his counsellors, he charged one of them to draw up in his name a reply to the Cardinal's letter, making known the state of the Society and its inadequacy for the proposed work, and adding that he would conform to the Cardinal's decision in the matter.

Without delay, Cardinal Simeoni replied that we must bow before the desire of the Holy Father whose will was formal. This letter ended all hesitation; we accepted unanimously. The will of the Pope is not discussed, it is obeyed with simplicity. Better that the Congregation should perish than that his will should be resisted. On the following 16th April, Father Chevalier addressed his acceptation to the Cardinal. His letter expresses so clearly the habitual disposition of his soul, that we have pleasure in quoting it:

Most Eminent Cardinal,

The proposition which the Holy See deigns to make to by by your intermediary honours us as much as it frightens us. We were far from expecting that the Holy See would cast its eyes on the Humble Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in order to confide to them this important mission. To undertake the evangelisation of New Guinea and the neighbouring archipelagos is assuredly a task far above our strength. The manners of the natives, their savage character, their difficult languages, the climate of these equatorial countries, all suggest to us the most laborious of apostolate.

The official letter which Your Eminence paid me the honour of writing me in order to transmit the wish of the Holy Father bears the date of 25th March. This date is significant. It is the date chosen by Heaven to announce the news of salvation through the Incarnate Word. It is also

the day that Pope Leo XIII has chosen to propose to us, through his faithful messenger, the Missions of Melanesia.

After the example of Mary, we have made known our great inadequacy and our legitimate anxiety. Since, in spite of these sincere avowals, Your Eminence says to us in the words of the angel, "Fear not. Accept the offer. The Holy Spirit will be with you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," we bow respectfully and, with the Virgin of Nazareth, our humble Congregation replies; "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy Word." And with St. Peter: "At Thy word I will let down the net."

On the 14th May the Cardinal, in his own name and in that of the Pope, congratulated Father Chevalier on his generous resolutions. He added: "For the time being, it is sufficient that a few missionaries go to the Vicariate."

What was this Vicariate for which the Holy Father asked a few missionaries? We find the answer to this question in the Annals of August, 1874. We cannot do better than reproduce it.

"At the very time when our little Society was being founded at Issoudun with the firm resolution of sharing the Church's combat against the darkness and corruption of paganism, owing to the cruelty of the savages and the countless difficulties met with on these inhospitable shores, two large Vicariates Apostolic of Oceania had lost the generous Missionaries who were bringing to them the light of faith and the benefits of religion.

The demon alone remained master of the field of battle. And what a battle field it was! The Vicariate of Micronesia was 4,500 miles long by 1050 miles wide, and that of Melanesia was 2400 miles long by 900 wide. In all, 1600 islands and a great distance apart!"

Such was the field which the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were called upon to open up and to cultivate. To undertake this task which would have required many legions of apostles, the Congregation could **supply only three priests**: Father Joseph Fernand Durin, superior of the whole mission, whose health was exhausted by the long and difficult voyage, and above all by the excessive heat of those latitudes, and who was forced to return to Europe before he had set foot on the Mission; Father Louis Andre Navarre, who became the first Vicar Apostolic of New Guinea, and Father Theophile Cramaille, the first priest from the Apostolic School who died in the Red Sea on the 22nd September, 1896, as he was returning to France to renew his strength after 15 years of privations and apostolic labours.

These three generous apostles set out, accompanied by two Lay-Brothers. Leo XIII blessed their holy expedition, and said to their superior, as he knelt at his feet: "Go without fear. It is the Church who sends you. God will bless your devotedness."

Fortified by the Holy Father's blessing and full of confidence in his promises, they will go "without fear." Nothing will be able to daunt their ardour for the salvation of the souls confided to them by the Church. Privations and sufferings will be countless; dangers of all sorts will increase under their footsteps; obstacles overcome will unceasingly rise up again but, under the eye of God and for His love, they will undertake the work they have been commissioned to found.

On 1st September, 1881, all five embarked on the boat which was to carry them towards the land of their apostolate. Alas! Only three reached the journey's end. As we have said, the Superior of the mission was stricken with sickness and one of the brothers had to accompany and care for him on the return journey.

Three to undertake the conquest to the Gospel of a whole world! What will they do? A vain question which did not in the least occupy our intrepid apostles. On arriving, their first thought is one of gratitude. They sing the "Magnificat" in thanksgiving.

It had taken them thirteen months to cross the ocean and reach their journey's end. They had left on 1st September, 1881 and did not arrive until the 29th September 1882. On October 3rd following, Father Navarre wrote to Father Chevalier announcing their arrival! His letter begins with these significant words: "We have arrived at last!" There follow the details of the trip from Sydney to Beridni, Blanche Bay, New Britain. Then he adds: "The banner of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, blessed by Leo XIII before our departure, is at last planted on this Papuan soil. We have taken possession of these barbarous countries in the name of this Adorable Heart, Who wishes to reign by love over these poor savages; in the name of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, glorious Protectress of all the abandoned; and in the name of the Holy See, who deigned to confide this mission to us."

Under these modest lines, can we not sense the beating of the heart of an apostle, burning with love for the souls of the natives whom he has come to snatch from the darkness of error, and lead to the Heart of Jesus? In setting foot on this land, his only desire is to submit all its inhabitants to the sweet and light yoke of the Saviour, and to make of them devoted sons of Holy Church, and elect of Heaven.

A quarter of a century has passed by since then. After twenty five years, what has the work of our three first missionaries become? Today, in 1908, we find four flourishing Vicariates Apostolic, three governed by bishops, named Vicars Apostolic, and one by a Superior. Each of these Vicariates comprises numerous stations confided to the care of missionary priests, having with them lay brothers, native catechists, and often Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for the girls' schools, the sick, and the native women.

We also find an immense Prefecture Apostolic organised in the same manner and to which we hope the Pope will soon give a Vicar Apostolic.

The Pope's blessing has caused this sterile earth to bear fruit. His words have been fully realised. God has blessed the devotedness of His apostles. They have given generously their labours and their sufferings, and the Heart of Jesus has spread over these desolate regions the Treasures of His infinite mercy.

CHAPTER 15.

At the time of the expulsions of 1880, when Father Chevalier transferred the Novitiate to Holland, he had in view, not only to procure a refuge where the novices in solitude and peace could finish their religious formation, his gaze rested on wider horizons. Holland appeared to him as good soil where the faith was deeply rooted and bearing great fruit. From the beginning, the Association of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had been established there in a way that was providential.

In 1866, with the approval of the Bishop of Ruremonde, a confraternity affiliated to the Association of Issoudun had been erected in the Chapel of the Ursuline Nuns of Sittard, Dutch Limbourg. This was a humble beginning. It was limited to a boarding school and a Convent. Thanks to the zeal of the Ursuline Nuns, the devotion soon spread to the dioceses of the Low Countries, to Belgian Limbourg, Rhenish Prussia and even further.

On the 11th December, 1873, in the Ursuline Chapel, Monsignor Paredis, Bishop of Ruremonde, crowned the statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the name of Pope Pius IX. At that time the Confraternity of Sittard numbered four million associates in Holland and the neighbouring countries. Father Chevalier concluded his discourse on that occasion, with these words:

"Already, your sanctuary with its exvotos has become a centre of numerous pilgrimages but it is too small for the large crowds which I see kneeling so fervently at the Feet of Our Blessed Lady. I feel that I am speaking on behalf of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart when I ask you today, in Her name, to erect a larger shrine, more in keeping with the extraordinary growth of the Association in your rich and generous country."

This desire of our Father was promptly realised. That same day, with the Bishops approval, a subscription list was opened and many generous offerings received. Some years later the new sanctuary was opened to the faithful. When seven years afterwards the novices were expelled from France and sought refuge in Holland, they could admire the monument of faith and love erected to the glory of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. This was a great consolation for them. Prostrate at the feet of the Madonna, crowned as at Issoudun in the name of the great Pius IX, their "Founder and Father," they prayed fervently that their powerful Protectress would assist them in their new home and bless their benefactors.

After what Father Chevalier had heard and seen during the feast of the Crowning - those days of triumph for the Immaculate Virgin, he was convinced that Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had herself prepared a new field in which to exercise their zeal. And so, when the hour of trial sounded, he had not hesitated to direct the novices towards this blest land. It was a remarkable thing that amongst the novices of that time there were some from Holland, all born in the diocese in which Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had chosen to establish Her glorious pilgrimage.

We marvelled at this coincidence, arranged with a delicate attention by Divine Providence. Father Chevalier who had been greatly impressed by the strength of faith of these Catholic people and who had seen with his own eyes their confidence in, and love for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart concluded, not without reason, that if She had already chosen privileged souls to be consecrated to the Heart of Her Son, it was because this tender Mother was holding in reserve many workers of the Gospel for the day when he would be able to establish his work in this region so rich in saintly vocations. These conclusions proved true.

From 1882, the little house at Gera near the Seminary where the novices had been so charitably welcomed, had become too small. Also, Father Chevalier was anxious about the outlook for his Apostolic School at Issoudun. He feared, and rightly so, that the students might be suddenly expelled from the refuge which his foresight had provided for them. Far from abating, the storm aroused against the religious Congregations was growing more threatening. Under the influence of these fears, Father Chevalier wrote to the Superior of the Novitiate: "The Apostolic School is no longer secure at Issoudun. At any moment now, we might receive the order to send our boys home to their parents. Look for a house where you could receive them with the novices and scholastics. Hurry as we have no time to lose."

This order troubled terribly the Superior to whom it was given. Like all weak souls,* he saw rising up around him insurmountable difficulties. He wanted to obey, but could he manage it. Above all could he competently direct these three works of which he would have charge? He was already feeling so keenly the weight of responsibilities which the direction of the Novitiate imposed on him.

At this time of perplexity he received a letter from one of his former penitents, - a chosen soul - seeking counsel. At the end of his reply he added, "Pray much for an affair concerning souls, and about which I am greatly troubled. Pray to Father Vandel that I may obtain the light which I lack." This person had great confidence in Father Vandel, who had died in the odour of sanctity five years before and to whom, she felt, she owed many favours. On the other hand, she had no means whatever of knowing what the projects were that were recommended to her prayers and she lived

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Probably the humble Father Pipéron is referring to himself.

far from Issoudun. A second letter arrived a short time after with this message: "Father Vandel has charged me to write and tell you that you must have no anxiety. The Apostolic School will succeed."

These words calmed all the Superior's fears. From then on he set himself with confidence to the work imposed on him. Henceforth nothing disconcerted him in spite of all the difficulties which arose. He had the assurance that God wanted this work. The Heart of Jesus could make it succeed in spite of the incapacity of the instrument He deigned to use.

In the month of October following the house was prepared. The novices and scholastics took possession of it, and a short time after the boys arrived. It was an old factory, long since abandoned, and was situated at Tilbourg in the district of Veldhoven. In a few months it was transformed into a monastery. There was certainly nothing about its sorry appearance to flatter the exigencies of nature. Its poverty was extreme, but at least it served to carry on the works of the Congregation. The future was assured.

Three years had scarcely passed by before Father Chevalier was thinking of a new foundation. This had become necessary as the house at Tilbourg was no longer large enough. This time the zealous Founder turned his thoughts towards Belgium. He was convinced that the Catholics there, who right from the outset welcomed the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart with such great joy and love would also welcome a house of Missionaries.

He was not mistaken. The house was founded at Bergerhaut in Anvers. Father Bontemps who was then at Issoudun was put in charge of this new foundation, and became its first superior. But Divine Providence reserved this dear Father for a more important work, far more difficult and perilous than the foundation of a house in a civilised country. He was destined to found a new mission, that of the Gilbert Archipelago.

He stayed only a few months at Anvers. Father Chevalier yielding to his repeated requests, permitted him to set out for Sydney whence, after a short time, he departed for the Gilbert Islands. After a long and difficult voyage, made more difficult by the lack of regular shipping between Sydney and this archipelago, he arrived and wrote to Father Chevalier on the 8th May, 1888: "We landed at Nonouti, and went to Tapuaki, a name which means 'the holy place'. The inhabitants, to the number of about two hundred, gave us a good welcome." With Father Bontemps were Father Joseph Leray, today Vicar Apostolic, and Brother Conrad Weber - three in all, like the three first missionaries who, five years before, had taken possession of the immense vicariates of Melanesia and Micronesia on which the Gilbert Archipelago depends.

Father Chevalier watched the Congregation's progress in the North with gratitude. He wanted the new house at Anvers to be large, so that it could receive the vital workers of our Society: the two novitiates, that of the Lay-Brothers and that of the students for the priesthood; a schol-

asticate for students in philosophy and theology; and a school for the Apostolic School boys of Belgium and Germany. He wanted Anvers also, to become a Seminary for our missions, which were developing rapidly, and continually needing new subjects. The house of Tilbourg was to keep its own prosperous Apostolic School.

Already we were beginning to feel the merciful action of the Heart of Jesus Who, according to the designs of His Divine Wisdom was choosing His apostles from the various nations for the propagation of the Gospel. Germany at that time was casting covetous eyes on New Britain and the surrounding islands.* These islands have, since then, become the Bismark Archipelago, and New Britain became New Pomerania. Father Chevalier who was watching these events thanked Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for having prepared in advance German subjects to continue the work of evangelisation so heroically commenced by his three first missionaries. It is very probable that if the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had not been established in New Britain when the German ships brought the first Governor of the Bismark Archipelago, they would never have entered there. Also, if they had not been able to supply German subjects they would have found it very difficult to maintain themselves there. From this arose the foundation of a German province. This was a second province to be formed.

The first was that of the North comprising the houses of Holland and Belgium, and erected on the 5th May, 1894. To this province is attached the Prefecture Apostolic of Dutch New Guinea and the Kei Islands whether its first missionaries set out in the autumn of 1903.

Amongst the numerous difficulties of the missions of Oceania, we can give first place to the lack of regular and frequent communication with civilised countries. The majority of the inhabitants are natives. They live miserably from day to day, by hunting or fishing or on native fruits. They know no trade. They cannot settle down to any permanent work, unless it is a matter of extreme necessity. And so, when the missionaries arrive in these countries, they are in danger of dying of misery and hunger unless they can supply themselves with all that they need - food, clothing, tools and many other indispensable things. They must also

* When our missionaries landed in this territory, it belonged to a European Country. Father Chevalier suggested to the French Government that his missionaries should officially take possession of it in the name of France. The reply given to him was: "We have enough Colonies." Thus Germany, more wide awake, herself got possession of what promised to become a rich and flourishing colony. This time, as on many other occasions, the Evil Spirit, in inspiring the French Government with this disdainful reply, had made a mistake. For if New Britain had become a French Colony, the foundation of the mission would have been impossible.

arrange some means of renewing their provisions from time to time. So the mission must be connected with some large port where boats call regularly. Hence also, the need of having a Procure with a Mission Procurator at such a port.

Our first missionaries set out in 1881, destined by the Holy See for the free colony of New France, and they counted on the boat of that colony to keep them in supplies. This illusion was short-lived. They soon learned of the complete ruin of the colony, and the dispersion of the colonists.

Under these new conditions our dear missionaries found that a Procure at Sydney was indispensable. And they felt this necessity more keenly when, nine months after their arrival, on the 27th June, 1883, within half an hour their palm leaf house and all its contents went up in flames. They had nothing left, scarcely even enough clothing. The fire which took them by surprise in the night, burnt everything.

Three months later, on the 21st September, Father Navarre, who at last had managed to get a boat to Sydney, wrote to Father Chevalier: "We are ruined! May the Sacred Heart be praised! The flames devoured our dwelling and absolutely all that we possess, leaving us almost nothing to wear on a cold night. But this has not weakened our perseverance, our invincible trust in the Sacred Heart, or our confidence in the success of our mission, commenced with such difficulty. The help of God is above all." On the 4th October, Father Navarre completed his letter. He wrote: "Here we are at Sydney after four weeks at sea....I will wait here for the arrival of our new confreres whose help will be very useful to us. Send us as much as you can by these Fathers, for we have nothing left - no books, no vestments or sacred vessels. I would also like a statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart."

The heroic apostle had to wait almost a year before the help, so urgently needed, arrived. France was so far away!

At the first news of the disaster the mission procurator, then residing at Sydney, had provided for the most urgent needs of the Missionaries. From then on it was decided to establish a procure there. To facilitate this foundation, Cardinal Moran, always so devoted to our missions, confided a parish to our Fathers. On 4th February, 1885, Father Navarre wrote from Sydney to Father Chevalier: "With Fathers Couppe and Verius, I visited the Cardinal and thanked him for the parish which he had just offered to us. He wishes to confide it to Father Couppe who will keep with him two of our Sisters to open a school. At the same time, Father Couppe will be procurator of the mission."

On the 25th July of this same year Cardinal Moran deigned to write to Father Chevalier from Rome where he had gone to pay his homage to the Sovereign Pontiff. This letter is so full of kindly interest, that we will quote the chief passages. The Cardinal congratulated Father Chevalier on having accepted "with such courage and confidence in the Sacred

Heart, the immense and difficult vicariates of Melanesia and Micronesia, which had been vacant for more than a quarter of a century." Then he added: "I myself have witnessed the spirit of faith and the constancy of Father Navarre, the Superior of the mission, and his worthy confreres. I thought the best favour I could show them would be to offer them a shelter in Sydney, so as to be able to establish their Procure, and at the same time to provide them with a parish in my diocese."

The Cardinal's offer was accepted gratefully. The missionaries became established at Botany Bay. When he confided to them this small Parish, the Cardinal had said to them smilingly: "Courage, Fathers! You will have much to do, but this is a parish which will suit you, for you will find in it a souvenir of France and the tomb of a French priest."*

The two Fathers appointed to this parish certainly did need courage. There was only a poor tiny church far from the town, to which a priest had come from time to time to celebrate Mass and administer the sacraments. The humble parish possessed neither presbytery, nor pastor, nor schools for the children. The two Fathers took up the task generously and did their best. But Botany Bay could not become the mission procure. It was too far out from the city and the harbour. It could be only a temporary establishment.

The Cardinal realised this. And so, as soon as the Parish of Randwick which was nearer the city became vacant, he confided its administration to the Missionaries. They rebuilt the church and dedicated it to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, enlarged the presbytery, and founded schools. Randwick became the Mission Procure until Australia was erected into a Province on 8th December, 1905. From then on, the procure was established in a house specially appointed for the service of the Missions, and directly under the Superior-General.

However, the missions did not absorb all the attentions of Father Founder. He saw with great consolation the number of his religious increase. Although removed far from France, the novitiate became more and more flourishing. To the subjects who came from France were added those from Holland, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, England, Italy and even Spain.

When he blessed the first departures for Melanesia, Pope Leo XIII had said: "You will need many missionaries." The desire of this grand Pontiff was realised. The Heart of Jesus was choosing apostles from amongst the various Catholic nations to establish His reign in the distant islands where He was still unknown.

* The souvenir of France to which the Cardinal alluded was the monument erected by the French Government on a headland dominating the sea in honour of La Perouse, and the priest was Father Receveur, a Franciscan, who came in the expedition of La Perouse, and who died at Sydney in 1788.

Father Chevalier followed with admiration and profound gratitude this work of grace in souls from so many different countries. He wanted to neglect nothing to encourage and develop it as much as possible. It was a powerful means put within his reach by the Sacred Heart Himself to spread in all countries the knowledge and love of this Divine Heart and to bring about the realisation of the cherished motto: "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be **Everywhere Loved!**"

In the midst of the most difficult trials he had hoped against hope, and now the Heart of Jesus was recompensing the unshakeable confidence of His apostle - placing under his direction apostolic workers from different countries and of different languages, as if to say to him, "Fear not. Labour without losing confidence! I will reign in spite of My enemies."

Father Chevalier's first care was to re-establish, in so far as circumstances would permit, the Community of the Sacred Heart at Issoudun. Before the expulsions, he had founded, in accord with the laws and University regulations, an establishment for the secondary instructions of boys of the surrounding district. In spite of the persecution, this school remained open. The boys of the Apostolic School were admitted to it, first as day pupils, then as boarders with their professors. The Community was thus **reinstated**, and could support itself in spite of much administrative "red tape" which Father Chevalier knew how to overcome. A few years later, the seals put on the doors of the Basilica became worn out and fell off. From then on it was possible to enter and say Mass. And a short time after, to the great joy of the faithful of Issoudun and of the pilgrims, the ceremonies were held there as in the past. If the local administration was just as intolerant, Father Chevalier found more goodwill in high places, and he knew how to use it with prudence and moderation in order to maintain and develop his works for the growth of his Congregation.

And so, in 1885, he established a residence in Paris, and a few years later, one at Vichy in the diocese of Moulins, and then a mission procure at Marseilles. In 1889 he sent a few missionaries to take possession of the College of Canet-de-Mar, a province of Barcelona in Spain. In 1890, at the suggestion of Monsignor Marchal, he occupied the old abbey of Chezal-Benoit. In May, 1894, he established the Province of the **North**, and three years after, that of Germany. In 1896, he opened a novitiate at Kensington, Sydney, for the Australian Province. Then came the houses of St. Albans and of Braintree in England, that of Natick in the United States of America, and finally, in 1900, that of Quebec in Canada. In the same year the Italian houses of Rome, Florence and Omegna, in the diocese of Novare, were erected into a Province. Let us add to these foundations the frequent despatch of new workers for the Missions to replace those who had fallen by the way or **to** increase the number of stations in proportion to the progress of the apostolate in these regions, and we can form some idea of the labours of Father Chevalier to his extreme old age.

At the time of his death then, the 21st October, 1907, the Congregation was divided into five provinces; that of France, so terribly devastated by persecution, those of the North, of Germany and of Italy and finally the Australian Province erected on 9th December, 1905.

To the French Province was confided the two Vicariates Apostolic of British New Guinea and the Gilbert Islands which are both governed by a Vicar Apostolic. To the German Province belonged the Vicariates of New Pomerania and the Marshall Islands. The Prefecture Apostolic of Dutch New Guinea was founded by the Province of the North, and the Australian Province provided for the needs of the diocese of Victoria and Palmerston.

These five large and difficult missions produced great fruits of salvation. Sufferings, trials and privations of all sorts abounded, but the blessings of the Heart of Jesus sustained the Missionaries in their heroic sacrifices and devotedness and filled them with consolation. Is it not the missionary's most perfect joy and highest ambition to open heaven to the souls whom he evangelises? His heart, like the Heart of Jesus Who sends him, is consumed with the desire of saving souls. On seeing the growth of his Congregation, and learning of the success amongst the pagans of his valiant missionaries, our venerated Father was filled with deep joy. It was to him a sweet consolation in the midst of his keen sufferings and also amid the numerous trials occasioned him by the apparent annihilation of his works in France. Deep down in his soul he cherished the firm confidence that time would see the humiliation of the persecutors. Then from amid the ruins caused by them there would be reborn the holy works which they thought to have annihilated forever. Must not the Heart of Jesus reign and be known throughout the whole earth, and be everywhere loved!.....

CHAPTER 16.

Father Chevalier's last years were an uninterrupted series of poignant sufferings of body, of soul and of heart. To the many infirmities of old age, which in his case were very painful and greatly prolonged, were added the persecutions from without which had been raging furiously for long years against this Congregation and his works, employing every means to annihilate them.

But all these tribulations did not shake the strong soul whom they attacked. He welcomed them as he had always accepted trials, with a complete and humble submission to the Will of God. He united them lovingly with the unspeakable sufferings of Our Divine Redeemer, in reparation for his own sins and those of the souls confided to him. Many times we heard him say, "I am only a poor sinner who deserves a thousand times more suffering for my countless infidelities. Happy shall I be if, in His mercy, my Sovereign Judge deigns to accept my sufferings, to purify me from all my stains."

The thought of death was ever present to him and he prepared for it. One day about four years before his death - he called to him his successor, to speak with him of our works, to give him counsels and recommendations, and reveal to him his last wishes. As senior religious, I was present. It was a solemn moment, touching beyond expression. The holy old man was sitting in his arm chair in the state of extreme weakness. His face, emaciated by long and cruel suffering, reflected the pallor of death which seemed near. As we looked at him, we could scarcely restrain our tears. Then, in full possession of his faculties, he spoke calmly to us of his last hour which he thought had arrived. Then with an astonishing lucidity in view of his age, he outlined the needs of the Congregation in the contemporary crisis, the dangers to which it was exposed, and the means to be taken to safeguard it. He pointed out the means of fostering and developing among us the practices of devotion to the Sacred Heart according to our vocation; love of our rule; and fidelity to all the duties of religious life.

Under each of his words, in every one of his counsels, we sensed the vibrations of his heart, and the radiation of his paternal love. At no time in his life did we ever see so keen and so touching the expression of his tender solicitude for the Congregation, and for each of its members.

When we were retiring to give him a little rest after this great effort, he said to me in a low voice, "Wait, Father, I want to speak to you alone." He then spoke to me of intimate matters, and gave me his paternal counsel. And after a moment of recollection, he said in a tone of deep emotion. "Dear Father, my end is near. At any moment God may call me to Himself. I await His hour in peace, full of confidence in the inexhaustible mercy of the Heart of Jesus. I tell you for your consolation, a few days ago I made a review of my whole life in a general confession. Now nothing any longer disquiets me. I am ready to die whenever it pleases God." And then in tones of deepest humility which moved me to the depths of my soul, and brought tears to my eyes, he added, "I have wronged you many times during the long years we have lived together. I have asked God's pardon, and I firmly hope that He has granted it to me. Tell me yourself, that you pardon me. That will be a comfort to me, a sweet consolation now at this hour."

In his humility our beloved Father had reversed the roles. I had nothing to pardon him, but much to thank him for that, in his extreme condescension and patient long-suffering, he had borne with me as one of his religious. After God, after Our Blessed Lady, it was to him that I owed the fact of having been able to follow my vocation and to persevere in it. Kneeling at his feet, I thanked him from the profound depths of my heart. I begged him to pardon me all the troubles I had caused him and asked him to bless me which, with his usual kindness, he did.

Such was our last interview, four years before his death. From that time on, unfortunately, the distance of exile and the weight of years, deprived me of the consolation of seeing him again.

When I left him, with my soul still under the influence of his great virtues and the perfect dispositions which he had manifested, I thanked the Heart of Jesus for having once more allowed me to witness such things, and I said with St. Margaret Mary, "How sweet it is to die, after having loved all one's life the Heart of Him Who is to be our Judge."

I was the only one to whom our Father gave this testimony of deep affection and profound humility. He acted in the same way with all those whom he thought he had offended. He did more than that: practising to the letter the Gospel commandment to pardon injuries, he neglected no occasion of rendering services to those who had injured him most. Hence those who knew him intimately used to say, "If you want to obtain a favour from Father Chevalier, do him an injury."

However, his strength declined rapidly. His infirmities increased with the years, and rendered more difficult the grave obligations attached to the government of the Congregation, and the administration of a vast parish. It is true that he found in his helpers an affectionate devotedness and a great desire to lighten to the best of their ability the heavy burden which he felt his failing strength could not support. This was a great solace to him and it made up for many of his past trials. He had suffered so much!..... However, the thought of relieving himself of at least a part of his responsibilities became each day more urgent, and he resolved to accomplish his design. To this end with the authorisation of the Holy See, he convoked a Chapter. Before all else, the Capitulants were required to receive the resignation of the Father Founder, and to elect a successor; or if they judged it more advantageous to the interests of the Congregation, they were to re-elect him. In this latter case, to lighten his charge, they could elect a Vicar-General, with full right to succeed him. Thus the Holy See had decided.

The first general session of the Chapter took place on the 23rd April, 1900. Father Founder presided at it. After the prayer and the customary formalities, he asked the capitulants if it pleased them to declare that the Chapter had been legitimately and canonically convoked and assembled. All having responded in the affirmative, Father Chevalier recollected himself a moment and then read in a firm voice, the act of resignation drawn up in these terms:

"Dear and Beloved Fathers,

I can only confirm here what I said to you in my circular, dated 16th July, 1899. In view of my advanced age, my infirmity which prevents me from making long journeys, and the desire of knowing my successor, in order to initiate him into the affairs of our dear Society, I offer you purely and simply my resignation as Superior General, and beg you, my dear confreres, to have the goodness to accept it."

The Fathers of the Chapter listened to the reading of this grave document with religious attention and all the respect due to the words of a venerated Superior, who, for more than fifty years had worn himself out

for the Congregation, and in the works of a laborious apostolate. Although this beloved Founder's resolution had been known since the reception of the letters convoking the Chapter, his words moved all present to the very depths of their souls. They would willingly and unanimously have urged him to withdraw his resignation. They did better. In religious congregations, the election of a Superior is by secret ballot, thus to assure all entire liberty in their vote. The president therefore proposed to the Capitulants a first ballot to say ~~whether~~ they accepted the resignation or not.

The votes were unanimous. All accepted it. From that moment the Congregation was without a Superior General, and the Chapter without a President. The First General Assistant, Father Ramot, as was his right, took provisionally the place of the resigned Superior who, consequent upon the vote of his confreres had become a simple religious. The next thing was to elect a Superior-General. The provisional President, in a few earnest and well-chosen words, recalled the great merits of Father Founder. Then he read the passage of the Constitutions of the Society which fixed the mode and the conditions for the election of a Superior General. When all formalities were carefully accomplished, all proceeded to the ballot.

When the President proclaimed that Father Chevalier had been unanimously elected, all the Capitulants applauded warmly and with great joy. Father Chevalier submitted humbly to the decision of the Chapter which according to his desire, gave him, by a new vote, a Vicar General with right of succession. This was Father Arthur Lanctin.

This double election, submitted by the Chapter to the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff, was confirmed by a decree of the 5th May following. Comforted by this testimony of the esteem and affection of his confreres, Father Chevalier took up again the government of the Congregation with humble generosity. Alas, the painful events which followed, did not permit him to keep it for long.

If it enters into the designs of the Divine Redeemer to give the Cross lavishly to His most faithful and devoted servants that so they may be more conformed to His suffering life, the tender affection of His Heart also arranges for them hours of sweet joy and strengthening consolation. In this way, His unspeakable wisdom proportions the trials and sufferings to the measure of our weakness. Divine consolations give repose to the soul and renew its strength for further combats.

Our venerated Father often experienced this. One of his maxims, and better still, one of his practices was that we must receive all from the Hand of God, both consolations and afflictions, since all comes from the same Heart of our Heavenly Father, and all must contribute to His glory and the good of souls.

The first years of this twentieth Century which commenced in suffering for our Father, brought also true joys. On the 18th March, he assisted at the episcopal consecration of one of his missionaries. This was the fifth since he had accepted, with such generous confidence, the immense vicariates of Melanesia and Micronesia. The first had been Monsignor Navarre the intrepid and valiant apostle who, with a single priest Father Cramaille and a Lay-Brother Brother Fromm had undertaken the conquest of the Gospel of those countless oceanic populations. Consecrated at Issoudun on 30th November, 1887, he has remained at his post for more than a quarter of a century, in spite of labours, sufferings and illness. This venerable septuagenarian (he was born on 2nd February, 1836,) had lost nothing of his apostolic zeal, nor his ardour for souls, but he felt his strength abandoning him after twenty six years of toil in a killing climate and, in the great interest he bore his mission, he wished to share his pastoral charge with a younger and more energetic co-adjutor.

In April, 1889, His Holiness, Leo XIII, had named as Vicar Apostolic of New Pomerania, Monsignor Stanislaus Henry Verius. This young apostle - he had scarcely completed his twenty-ninth year when he received episcopal consecration - was the heroic missionary who, under the direction of his superior, Father Navarre, had been the first to enter New Guinea, on the 29th June, 1885. Before embarking on this perilous expedition, he wrote to his Superiors in Europe, "Father Navarre, now thinks only of New Guinea, where we certainly expect the Cross. To see New Guinea, to work much there and to die!....." This formula in a few words gives us the loving expression of the sentiments of this apostolic soul, and sums up his whole life.

At the moment when Father Verius was named Vicar Apostolic of New Pomerania, Monsignor Navarre was in an alarming state of health, and now there was added to his sufferings the apprehension of losing the best of his missionaries, the one upon whom he rested all his hope for the future of the mission. "Ah," he said, "If only the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda knew our needs!"

So he addressed a request to the Cardinal begging him to leave in New Guinea its first apostle, and in view of his own exhausted strength, not to deprive him of this necessary helper. He also asked that Monsignor Verius be named his Coadjutor, with right of succession.

This humble petition produced the desired effect. Monsignor Verius did not leave New Guinea. He stayed with the Vicar Apostolic as Coadjutor. This was a great joy for all Port Leo, and for no one more than the humble and saintly Coadjutor. He loved New Guinea so deeply, and had worked and suffered there so much. In seven years despite frightful difficulties he accomplished immense work there until his death in the odour of sanctity in the thirty-third year.

However, the Vicariate of Micronesia had now become vacant. Father Coupe, despite his resistance, was elected Vicar Apostolic of Micronesia, in place of Monsignor Verius. He was consecrated in the Seminary Chapel of the Missions at Anvers, on the 9th October, 1890. Since that time his Vicariate has developed remarkably.

The Gilbert Archipeligo and the Ellice Islands were part of Micronesia until the year 1897. Then, considering the rapid progress of this mission, the Congregation of Propaganda made it a separate Vicariate and appointed Father Joseph Leray who during the preceding eight years had laboured there with indefatigable zeal and a rare devotedness as Vicar Apostolic. He was consecrated at Nantes, his original diocese, on the 26th June, 1898. This was the fourth bishop which our little and humble Congregation had given to the Missions confided to it by the Church.

The fifth was Monsignor Alain de Boismenu, appointed in 1899, Coadjutor to Monsignor Navarre, the heroic Vicar Apostolic of New Guinea. After the death of Monsignor Verius, seven years passed by before a successor was appointed. However, Monsignor Navarre's strength declined each day. Informed of this, the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda resolved to appoint another Coadjutor. The much-loved "Father Alain," as he was called, seemed designed for the important post. After a brilliant scholasticate, he had been a Professor at the Apostolic School for some years and finally he had set out for the long desired missions. His Superiors, convinced of his great qualities had proposed him as successor to Monsignor Verius. On the 18th March, 1900, he was consecrated Bishop in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre. He was the first bishop consecrated in this famous sanctuary.

Great was Father Chevalier's consolation when one of his missionaries was elected to the dignity of Vicar Apostolic. His paternal heart was stirred with a holy joy.

He saw in this a proof of the progress of the Gospel in the missions confided to his solicitude, and his ardent soul, consumed with zeal for the extension of the Kingdom of God, rejoiced thereat. He experienced no less a joy in the thought that on a mission, the Bishop becomes as it were the Father of the 'apostolic workers whom he guides and whose works he directs. Must he not console them in their trials; strengthen them in hours of weakness; foster and develop in their hearts the life of faith - of piety; and sustain them by his exhortations, his counsels and his example in the practice of the virtues necessary to their sublime vocation.

Consoling and comforting thoughts. They were, for our venerated, as a ray of light in an obscure night, as a break in a storm: they gave repose to his soul violently tortured both by suffering and by the terrible threats to the works dearest to him.

The consecration of Monsignor Alain de Boismenu was one of his last joys.

CHAPTER 17.

The year 1901 brought with it new and painful trials. In this year was discussed in the Chambers the Law on Associations, which, could more frankly be called the Law against Religious Congregations. Father Chevalier saw that, in whatever light this law was considered, it was an attempt to stifle all religious life in France. In spite of the appearance of liberalism under which it was disguised, he saw in it one of the many links of the chain by which the enemies of the Christian name hoped to bind the Church in shameful and mortal captivity. Results proved only too well the truth of this judgment.

It is easy to conceive the poignant sorrow experienced by his apostolic soul. Near the end of his long career, this venerable old man saw the malice of men threatening to ruin the two things that he loved most in the world, the Church and his Congregation. Certainly he did not forget that all the rage of Hell cannot prevail against the Church. Its Divine Founder has given the assurance of this. He hoped firmly also, that his Congregation would triumph over this trial, but the incalculable ruin that he foresaw oppressed his generous heart like a terrible nightmare.

However, the law was to be put into execution two months after its promulgation. Amongst other prescriptions, it exacted that all Religious Congregations, and each house depending on them, be authorised by the Government, and that under pain of banishment and confiscation of goods. The ministers advised the Congregations already authorised to seek a fresh authorisation to obviate any irregularities which might render the first one null. A touching solicitude, if only it had been sincere, but it was merely a snare cleverly veiled under apparently friendly terms.

The Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, which had existed already for nearly half a century, had not received the authorisation of the Government. Henceforth, under the new law, no Religious Congregation could exist in France, without the approbation of the Government. From this arose the alternative of the extreme agonising gravity: whether to solicit this authorisation and submit to the exigencies of a tyrannical legislation, based on hatred of religion, and with a view to ruin the Congregations; or to take the road to exile and seek, far from France, that fruitful and happy freedom which the French Government refused to its most devoted children.

Consulted on this matter, the Holy See left to the Superior of each Congregation, the care and responsibility of deciding this twofold question. Before making such a grave decision, Father Chevalier wished the question to be discussed by the principal members of his Congregation residing in France.

When all were gathered together, after a fervent prayer to the Holy Spirit, Father Chevalier explained the question clearly. In a few words

he spoke of its gravity and exhorted each one to give his opinion freely according to his convictions and to put forward the motives for this decision.

When all had stated their views, and the motives supporting them, he saw that a large majority - four-fifths - opposed the request for authorisation. "It is no use asking for what you are sure you will not obtain," they said, besides, if contrary to all probability, the authorisation were granted, it would place the Congregation under a legal servitude more harmful than the sufferings of exile and poverty. And again, the law giving the Government the power to withdraw the authorisation once given, the Congregation would be at the mercy of the Government. These reasons, amongst others, guided our confreres in their resolution. Events have proved only too truly that they acted wisely.

Having proclaimed the decision, Father Chevalier added in accents of deep sorrow that his charge of parish priest did not permit him to leave the parish without the Archbishop's authorisation; that he could not ask for this in this time of trial; and that he hoped to be able to be useful to the Congregation by remaining at Issoudun, whilst his age and infirmities would only make him a burden in exile. So when the moment came he would transmit his powers to his Vicar General, who would from then on become, in fact and by right, the Superior General and his successor. In conclusion, he recommended all to place the Congregation and its works with the entire confidence under the special protection of the Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The weeks which followed were profoundly sad and painful for Father Chevalier. He employed them, in concert with his Assistants, in taking the necessary measures to safeguard, as much as possible, the vital works of the Congregation, and in assigning to his religious their various employments. But alas! How many grave difficulties and unforeseen hindrances arose at the last moment, and exacted new measures which had to be taken in haste! Lamentable consequences of the persecution, which throughout all France were bringing trouble and desolation to the greater number of the Religious Congregations.

When the time came, Father Chevalier transmitted to his Vicar-General, Father Lanctin, all his powers. Then followed the hour of separation - an hour painful for all. And as one of us said to him by way of consolation, "Au revoir, Father, we will soon be returning." He replied, "Let us not deceive ourselves. Your exile will be long, longer than you think. And it is not likely that I shall see the end of it."

This was like the first stage in the sorrowful way which lay before him. How many other sacrifices, how many painful spoilations he still had to undergo during these last six years of his life.

By the 1st October of this year, 1901, all the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in France had left their peaceful dwellings. The Government according to the exigencies of the iniquitous law, hastened to take possession of all the goods of the Congregations, and to appoint officers for their administration, until such time as they could sell them as abandoned property. According to well-informed persons, our Congregation was in special disfavour with the Government and could not escape the vigilance of the Masonic Lodge. Hence, all that the Congregation possessed, even the Basilica, was taken from its lawful owners, to be administered according to the sacriligious views of the State, and one day to be sold at public auction by way of justice.

Father Chevalier watched with profound sorrow, the sinister events which succeeded one another with frightening rapidity. It is useless to enumerate them. They are but of yesterday and are still present to the minds of all.

As for the laws ~~against~~ the Religious Congregations - passed, as was said with audacious hypocrisy, to protect the secular clergy against the abusive encroachments of the regular clergy, they were soon followed by the law of separation of Church and State and many others. Each of these laws made a deeper wound in Father Chevalier's heart. Nevertheless this holy old man, so weakened by age and infirmities, found in his wonderful abandonment to the Divine Will, fresh strength to support these new and painful trials. "God is punishing us," he used to say, "Let us adore the Merciful Hand Which strikes. He will draw good for us from these calamities."

And when the tempest which was raging with such violence tore from his failing hands one after the other, the strong branches of the tree he had so lovingly planted in the field of Holy Church, he did not complain, but accused himself. "To punish me," he said in his spiritual testament, "God has permitted that I be the butt of the most painful trials." Like the Royal Prophet, his faults were unceasingly present to his thoughts. He deplored them in the bitterness of his soul, and accepted all that was painful with humble resignation.

"We know," says St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, "that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints. For whom He foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son." This glorious resemblance to the Word Incarnate is wrought by God Himself with jealous care in the souls of all His elect. His grace, by the merits of His Crucified Son, operates this wonder. Suffering and sacrifice are the sacred tools employed by the Divine Worker to engrave more deeply in us His holy Image. We need not be surprised at seeing the just suffer, and as their last hour approaches, their sufferings ordinarily becoming more intense. God is them completing the great work of sanctification. It seems as if He is hastening to increase the merits of His elect, to raise their virtues to perfection before crowning them. Thus He displays His ineffable mercy and infinite tenderness towards His servants.

Our beloved Father who had consecrated his whole life to the Sacred Heart, and had worn himself out with indefatigable zeal in Its service, was not exempt from this law. It was necessary that the traits of resemblance with his Divine Model be perfected in his soul.

On Calvary the Adorable Victim was nailed to the Cross in utter destitution. Our Father must in some manner, and in the measure willed by God, share in this denudation of His Saviour. Founder of a Congregation which he loved beyond all expression, he saw himself obliged, in his extreme old age, to be separated from it. Certainly in view of a greater good he accepted this sacrifice with his whole will, but it was none the less crucifying. His fatherly heart could not, without pain, resign itself to be separated so far from his family, the object of his tenderest affection. He had seen the Basilica of the Sacred Heart closed, its altars stripped and the sanctuary of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart deserted.

He had seen the departure of his religious. This exile left empty and desolate the dwelling prepared so carefully by his fatherly solicitude. He had ardently desired that this house, where his work had come to birth, should be still and always the "Mother House," that is to say, the residence of the Superior-General and his assistants. God asked this sacrifice of him. Henceforth, the Generalate, by force of circumstances, would be fixed in Rome.

Helpless and with profound sorrow in his heart, he witnessed the sale of all those great and holy things, the fruits of his long works and daily sacrifices. And to crown all, a municipality without heart and without honour, threw brutally into the street, in the severest season - the 21st January, 1907 - this feeble old man, even now at death's door, after having smashed open the doors of his presbytery. Was not his spoilation complete?

Father Chevalier's soul was crushed under the weight of all these sorrows, but he generously submitted to the will of God, adoring the designs of Providence, Who permitted these hard trials for the greater good of His elect. His firm faith and unshakeable confidence were daily strengthened in the midst of these calamities. Thus, with rigour, but also with unutterable tenderness, the Heart of Jesus completed His work of sanctification in the soul of His devoted apostle.

In the midst of these terrible trials, the Immaculate Virgin, our August Mother, did not forget Her faithful and devoted servant who had loved and glorified Her so much. He had consumed his whole life in the effort to spread over the whole earth the knowledge and love of this ever-blessed title: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. New and splendid gem which his love had added to the crown of glory woven by the centuries in honour of the Mother of God! In all his trials and sufferings he had had recourse with filial confidence to her maternal tenderness, ardently beseeching her for the help of which he stood in need. And Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, generously drew from the Heart of Jesus, choice favours for Her apostle. Except for the mysterious intervention of this loved Mother, we could not explain Father Chevalier's wonderful dispositions and the strong and noble virtues of which he has left us the example.

From his very childhood, she had drawn him with special tenderness to Her service. She had kept him under Her maternal protection as a son of predilection. She guided him through all the difficulties of life. She inspired, blessed and conducted to a successful issue all his enterprises. To use the expression of this beloved Father, she did everything in his little Congregation of which She is the true Mother. She assisted therefore at the last combats of Her apostle. Yes, She was there mercifully bending over his bed of suffering, warding off with Her powerful arm the snares of Satan, consoling and strengthening this true son of Her tenderness, chosen by Her to manifest to the world by a glorious title Her ineffable power over the Heart of Jesus, and the immensity of the treasures of grace which She dispenses to all who invoke Her.

In dying Father Chevalier, with profound emotion would pass in review these innumerable favours of the Immaculate Virgin and used to offer Her the expression of his heartfelt gratitude.

Let all of us, children of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, after the example of our Father, give thanks to Her for all that She has done for him. For have we not participated abundantly in the gifts of Her boundless goodness.

The state of Father Chevalier's health gave cause for anxiety during 1904. His strength exhausted by long suffering and by the solicitude occasioned by events grew more feeble each day. Neither medical skill nor affectionate care succeeded in staying the progress of his illness, and death seemed near this tenderly-loved Father.

As we have seen, Father Chevalier abandoned all to the care of Providence, preparing with perfect calm to give back his soul to his Creator, and trusting to receive for himself mercy, and for his Congregation, the necessary help. In spite of his weakness, he lost no interest in the spiritual and temporal welfare of his Society. On his bed of suffering he employed with rare energy all his powers to this end; but deeply convinced that, without the action of Divine grace, the efforts of man remain sterile, he implored with humility and fervour the Divine benediction.

It was beautiful and touching to see this old man forgetting his sufferings to occupy himself with the interests of his large religious family. However, the illness pursued its course, and week followed week without bringing any improvement or relief. All hope of recovery seemed lost. Yes, all human hope was lost, but all things are possible to God, and is not Our Lady of the Sacred Heart the Advocate of hopeless cases? All prayed to Her with fervour to prolong the days of Her apostle. He was still necessary to the Congregation, and to his other works. The Missionaries and the members of the Archconfraternity united in the same confident prayer to their Heavenly Patroness. Alas, She seemed insensible to their petitions. Then one of our confreres proposed a novena to Monsignor Verius. A cure was asked through the intercession of this great apostle who had already obtained notable favours in response to prayer.



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Le 10 Avril 1902

Chères Enfants,

Je Vous remercie du fond
du cœur de vos Vœux de bonne
fête - Ils me porteront bonheur.
J'en ai besoin en ce moment où
Nous sommes si secourus par la
tempête. Espérons que Notre Seigneur
aura pitié de Nous et ramènera
bientôt la paix si désirée.
Je me réjouis du bon esprit qui
vous anime et de la piété qui
flourit parmi Vous
Je prie pour que le divin cœur
de Jésus fasse de Vous toutes de
saintes filles de N.-D. du Sacré
Cœur. Adieu, chères Enfants, je Vous bénis
toutes, sœurs, sœurs, sœurs et Maîtresses en C.

J. Chevalier
m.p.

FACSIMILE OF FATHER FOUNDER'S REPLY

to the letter written him by his Australian daughters for
his Feast Day of the 12th April.

(Translation over page)

The Novena finished on the 13th November, the anniversary of his death in 1892, and the feast of St. Stanislaus Kosta, his patron.

Now, on 13th November, the grace was granted. Father Chevalier entered upon a new lease of life which lasted four years. From the height of Heaven, Monsignor Verius had taken pity on his brothers in sorrow, and had obtained the cure of their good Father. Great was the joy of all, and keen was their gratitude towards Monsignor Verius, this brother of theirs blessed by God whose lofty virtues had edified them so much during his life, and who, by the mercy of the Heart of Jesus, now showed himself their powerful protector in Heaven.

TRANSLATION OF FOREGOING LETTER

Dear children,

From the depths of my heart I thank you for your prayerful feast-day wishes. They will bring me the blessings of which I have such need at this moment when we are so shaken by the storm of persecution. Let us hope that Our Lord will have pity on us and soon restore to us the peace which we long for so much.

I am very happy at the good spirit which animates you and at the devotedness which flourishes in your midst.

My prayer is that the Divine Heart of Jesus may make of each and every one of you a holy Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Adieu, dear children, I bless you all in C.J.,
Postulants, Novices and Mistresses.

J. CHEVALIER,

Archpr.

CHAPTER 18

At the hour of his death, Saint Martin, the great thaumaturgus of Gaul, addressed this prayer to God: "Lord, if I am still necessary to my people, I do not refuse to work." And Holy Church in her Office, proclaims him "a wonderful man, who could not be conquered by work, nor by death itself. He did not fear death, but nevertheless, he did not refuse to prolong his exile in this life" for the love of his people.

Without wishing rashly to compare our Father Founder with this great Pontiff, we may be permitted to say that we find in these two apostolic hearts similar dispositions in more than one respect.

Father Chevalier, as we have seen, accepted death with a generous and humble submission to the Divine Will. He awaited it in admirable peace and perfect tranquility of soul. He did not ask to die, and he did not refuse to live, but he put all his confidence in the Heart of Jesus, abandoning himself without reserve to His merciful goodness.

However, his disciples, like those of St. Martin, desired most ardently to keep their tenderly-loved Father with them yet longer. In unison with the members of the Archconfraternity they prayed fervently, begging Monsignor Verius to obtain this great favour. It was granted to them.

After his cure, this venerable octagenarian simply took up again his ordinary work, convinced that if the Heart of Jesus had prolonged his days he must employ them in His service for the good of the souls entrusted to him. Does not the life of a priest, the life of an apostle, belong without reserve to Him Who has called him to this sublime vocation?

Father Chevalier realised this. It was the great moving principle of his life and he will remain faithful to it right till his last hour. So now, as in the past, he was a miser with his time, concerned not to waste the least portion of it. All was employed with jealous care for the glory of his Sovereign Master and according to His Will.

As soon as he had recovered his strength, his first care was to draw up the counsels which he wished to leave as a sacred legacy to his religious. He had meditated on them in the presence of death and on the threshold of eternity, and through the long days of agony, from which the merciful hand of God had now withdrawn him.

This solemn document, a precious testimony of his paternal affection and solicitude for his religious family, was entitled: "Spiritual Testament to the Members of the Congregation of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart." These few pages contain the urgent desires and last wishes which a father's love has left in heritage to his children. They bear perpetual witness

to the holy dispositions, to the pure and noble sentiments with which his heart was inspired. For the readers' edification and at the same time, to give a more complete understanding of his state of soul and his virtues, we will quote a few extracts. How many examples of humility and of great priestly religious virtues they contain!

EXTRACT FROM FATHER CHEVALIER'S SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT.

"In spite of my unworthiness, the good God has deigned to make use of me, a vile instrument, to found the little Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. I have received in abundance the most precious graces, but, alas! I have not profited by them as I should have done..... And so, to punish me, God has permitted that I be the butt of the most terrible trials..... I freely pardon those, who more or less consciously, have been their cause. Today, all my confreres seem animated by the highest sentiments; and our little Society continues its mission with piety, zeal and devotedness. Far from shaking it, the persecution has only served to strengthen its religious spirit. The members have taken the road to exile with resignation and complete conformity to the most holy Will of God. May they be blessed a thousand, thousand-fold."

What a perfume of simple humility and cordial charity is here exhaled. Far from asserting his many claims to the gratitude of his children for whose benefit he has toiled for more than fifty years; far from glorying in his varied talents and the many graces he had received, the venerable old man confesses his unworthiness. He accuses himself of his failings and faults; he pardons those who have obstructed his works, and then he rejoices in the excellent dispositions of his confreres and attributes to them the good done by the Congregation.

But he is a father, and as such he owes it to his spiritual sons to make them profit by the lessons learnt during long experience. And so he adds:

"To the members of our beloved institute, which has such a beautiful future provided its fervour and regularity is preserved, may I be permitted, after fifty years of experience, to give a few counsels, which I hope will be useful to them."

Our Father has divided these counsels into three parts: some are addressee to all the members of the Congregation; some to the major superiors; and the last to the members of the Chapter which was announced for the year 1905.

The counsels given to all the religious are resumed under six headings. The first deals with fraternal charity - the affectionate union that must exist between all the members of the Congregation and his ardent desire that these bonds should be ever more closely knit. Is this not Our Lord's commandment given to His Apostles on the eve of His death? "This is My Commandment, that you love one another." Sweet and holy union which forms

the charm of religious societies and constitutes their power!

In the second he recommends an inviolable fidelity to the rules and Constitutions, despite the repugnance of nature.

The third deals with obedience which "is the soul of religious life and the security of the subjects."

In the fourth, he recalls to his religious their obligation to limit their relations with persons of the world to the duties of their ministry to souls and to the dictates of charity. He also gives a few rules on Christian prudence.

The fifth concerns the spirit of poverty which he wants his confreres to love and practise perfectly.

The sixth and last is an exhortation to them to fortify themselves against the doctrines which Pius X had recently condemned under the title of Modernism. We will let our Father express his thoughts on this subject himself. Let us note further that his testament is dated the 25th December, 1904, and that it must have been only in the last days of his life that he heard of the condemnation of these pernicious errors. (The Papal Decree was not published until 1907.) This shows us his foresight and his attachment to sound doctrine. We will quote his sixth counsel in full.

"Let all our religious keep clear of these bold doctrines, this neo-Christianity which tries to reconcile error with truth under pretext of leading souls to God. This is a profound error which verges upon Protestantism. Let them also guard against those modern and fantastic interpretations of Holy Scripture which restrict its inspiration and tend to destroy its divine authority. Let them hold always to the teachings of Holy Church; with her they have the assurance of remaining in the truth. In their discussions, let them range themselves always and energetically on the side of the Pope. His word is that of Jesus Christ Whom he represents on earth. He is our head and our guide. We must obey him in all and defend his authority towards and against all."

Such were our Father's constant dispositions. He had expressed them strongly in his Constitutions right at the commencement of his work, and had never departed from them. He desired nothing so much from his religious as a humble and entire submission to all the decisions and directions of the Sovereign Pontiff. The prescriptions of the Holy Father, his desires even, were always welcomed by him with love, as the prescriptions and desires of Our Lord Himself. He loved the Church and its infallible Head as he loved the Heart of Jesus. To love the Church, Christ's Immaculate Spouse acquired at the price of His sufferings and His blood, is it not to love the Sacred Heart?

After having given counsels of high importance and profound wisdom to the Superiors who were to govern the Congregation, Father Chevalier concluded

his testament with a fresh act of touching humility, which reveals the dispositions of his soul at this solemn hour and his affection for those whom he called his "beloved confreres", but who in reality are his disciples, his devoted and grateful sons.

In their simplicity, his last words contain a lesson of virtue too eloquent to be abridged in any way:

"Now, dear and beloved confreres, I have not passed through the course of my long administration without committing faults and without having given to some occasions of discontent, complaints and murmuring. I beg you to pardon me and to recommend to God my soul about to appear before my Sovereign Judge. I think I can declare here that I have sought in all things only the glory of the Sacred Heart, the good of our little Society, and of its members. I may have been mistaken in more than one circumstance, and so have caused dissatisfaction. I admit very humbly that I have not been equal to the mission confided to me. The neglect of grace and my numerous sins have many times paralysed the action of Divine Providence.

I am sure that I have given scandal and bad example. I humbly ask pardon and once more beg all my confreres to pardon me and beg God to show mercy to me and deign to admit me one day to Heaven, in spite of my unworthiness. I thank them sincerely for the affection which they have always shown me, for their precious concurrence, their sincere attachment to the Society and their wonderful devotedness both to me and to our works. This is a great consolation which I take with me to the grave. From the height of Heaven, if I have the happiness of one day possessing it, I will bless them unceasingly, and I will pray the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to protect them always."

Then, before closing his spiritual testament, our venerated Founder cast his paternal regard on the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which he had also founded. He added:

I bequeath to them (i.e. the Missionaries) the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, so good and so devoted. We have the same cradle. Like us they have come out of the Heart of Jesus by the powerful intercession of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. So I place them under their protection. I beg them to take to heart their interests, to serve them as Fathers, to guide them, to sustain them and to render them all the services in their power compatible with the laws of Holy Church.

Issoudun, 25th December, 1904.
J. CHEVALIER.

With this testament Father Founder wrote two others, one addressed to the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and the other to his parishioners, in whose service he had devoted himself for thirty-four years with a zeal beyond all praise.

of receiving his mortal remains. He thought there was no other place more suitable for this than the Basilica itself. There he would rest in the crypt under the very feet of the Madonna Whom he had so loved and glorified.

A few weeks before Father Chevalier's death, as he was talking with him, the Viscount informed him of what he had done to prepare his tomb. Father Chevalier expressed great gratitude and pleasure. Then with deep emotion he thanked him again for having saved the Basilica from profanation and ruin, and he promised to carry his memory to the feet of the Queen of Heaven, whom he hoped soon to contemplate in glory.

This was a great consolation and joy for Father Chevalier. The difficulties he feared so much had vanished. He could henceforth sleep in the peace of the Lord. We, his children, and with us, the members of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart shared largely in the joy of our beloved Father. With him, we will never cease to pray for the noble family to whom we are indebted for this supreme consolation granted to our beloved Father.

CHAPTER 19

After the 21st January, 1907, the day of his violent expulsion from his presbytery by the police, Father Chevalier's health became each day more alarming. The suffering caused him, the exhaustion resulting from this change of residence and of habits at such an advanced age, together with his spinal illness and his other infirmities hardly contributed to the comfort of the venerable old man.

Nevertheless, the first weeks after his brutal eviction did not produce the results that were feared. He had accepted this new sacrifice with such perfect resignation that he did not seem to be suffering unduly from events. Many visitors came to offer their sympathy to their venerated pastor. At times they expressed indignation against the conscienceless and heartless individuals who had treated him with such barbarity. But he replied, "God has permitted this in His infinite wisdom. Let us adore His ever merciful designs and submit to His divine Will." It was his favourite maxim, his constant practice, to accept the sufferings and troubles of life humbly, as a benefit of the divine mercy, and the expression of the Will of God. Many times already, we have shown his resignation and generosity in receiving trials - a wonderful disposition which he obtained

from the Heart of Jesus Himself. Did not Our Saviour pray in the depth of His Agony amid frightful anguish, "Father, not My Will but Thine be done?" His Sacred Heart was in the disposition to act constantly in all things for the good pleasure of His Heavenly Father.

And so, always careful to conform his sentiments to those of his Divine Model, Father Chevalier held no practice dearer than that of living in complete abandonment to the Divine Will. That is why we would hear him say during hours the most painful, "God wills it thus. May He be blessed!" That is why also we find him so strong in facing trials. Indeed, there is no more perfect or efficacious remedy in overcoming our weakness, than an entire abandonment to Divine Providence. The energy with which Father Chevalier supported his many and often intolerable sufferings had its source in this holy practice.

However, in the months which followed his instalment in the house put at his disposal by one of his most devoted parishioners, his state became visibly worse. His strength declined rapidly, and neither the enlightened attention of the doctor nor the unwearied solicitude of his infirmarian, who by night and by day during several years had care for the venerated Father with all the solicitude of an affectionate son, could halt the progress of the malady. From the beginning of May, all hope of preserving this precious life seemed lost. That is to say, all human hope was lost, but there still remained the ineffable power of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Preparations were already commencing for the Feast of the 31st May, so dear to all the members of the archconfraternity and particularly blessed by our divine Mother. So they resolved to seek the intercession of the Hope of the hopeless, the powerful Virgin Whose prayer is always favourably received by the Heart of Jesus. Prayers were asked from all the Associates, all houses of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the faithful of Issoudun.

During the exercises preparatory to the patronal feast of the Archconfraternity ardent petitions went up unceasingly to the Compassionate heart of our Mother. She was begged to prolong the days of her apostle whom with indefatigable zeal, had worn out his strength in making her known and loved. "No, we cannot meet with a refusal," pleaded thousands of fervent souls with a confidence that could not be shaken, "and since Thou art our Mother favourably hear and grant our prayers."

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart did hear all these prayers offered by so many grateful hearts. On the eve of the feast, a pilgrim asked news of Father Chevalier. The curate to whom he spoke replied, "Very ill. We would not be surprised if he died tonight."

Yet on the very morning of the feast itself he rose, and was able to celebrate Mass without fatigue. Moreover he had declared beforehand even though he seemed on the point of death, "Our Lady will cure me for Her Feast." On the following days he resumed his usual occupations. This was the response of our good Mother to the fervent prayers of her children.

Certainly he was not cured, but his life was prolonged, and that is what they had asked for. It provided sufficient time for him to arrange certain important affairs before his death. This improvement of health lasted until the first week of October.

On Monday, the 7th October, he felt himself definitely worse. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon he retired to bed. This was a grave symptom, as during the last three years, even during his worst sufferings, he had never wanted to stay in bed during the day. The next day, as he was growing progressively weaker it was thought prudent to prepare him to receive the last Sacraments. His confessor proposed it to him. "Yes, yes," he replied, "do me that service." And immediately, with perfect calm, he recollected himself in preparation. It was no surprise to him, since for long years he had had this thought unceasingly present to him. And each day he had prepared himself to appear before his Judge to render an account of a life so generously consecrated to the service of His divine Heart.

It was a truly solemn and moving moment when this valiant apostle, laid low by sickness, disposed himself to draw from "the fountains of the Saviour" the graces necessary for the last struggle. Whilst his confreres, his priestly family, were kneeling round his bed, praying in sorrowful silence, he concentrated in adoration all the powers of his soul on the Adorable Host. Yes, Jesus was there really living, really present. He had come to visit His priest whom for more than half a century, had held Him so often in his consecrated hands to offer Him to God in expiation for the sins of men, and who, thousands upon thousand of times, had given Him to men to sustain their failing strength and impart to them the graces of which His Sacred Heart is the Source.

The sacred minister, his brother in the priesthood, presented the Sacred Host to him: "Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world." The sick man gazed at It with adoring eyes and then with a profound sentiment of his own nothingness, repeated three times with the priest the "Domine non sum dignus." After these purifying words of mercy and love, the humble old man was able to receive without fear the Immaculate Host, the God Who sanctifies His elect. The priest then approached the bed, made the Sign of the Cross with the Sacred Host, and said: "Receive, my brother, as Viaticum the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he placed on the lips of the venerated Father the Adorable Host.

How to express the sublime and intimate colloquies which then took place between the Heart of Jesus and His humble servant at the moment when Communion united them in a bond so close? Who will ever know the sweet and mysterious outpourings of Jesus into the soul of His Apostle, and the transports of love, the ineffable consolations and the holy joys to which they gave birth? God alone could reveal to us this impenetrable secret.

After Holy Viaticum, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction was administered. In spite of his excessive weakness, he followed the ceremony attentively

with great clarity of mind, calmness and a lively faith, answering all the prayers and presenting his members for the anointing. When the ceremony was completed, he repeated many times, "Thank you, thank you." Weakness did not allow him to say more. However, at the request of his confreres, surrounding his bed, he raised hands to bless them, and all the members of the Congregation, all his works and the many benefactors who had helped him to found them and carry them on. Thus ended this day of the 9th October.

Fortified by the Sacraments which he had received, full of confidence in the mercy of the Heart of Jesus and entirely abandoned to the Will of God, Father Chevalier rested peacefully enough during the following night. The joy of his soul had reacted on the state of his health and for more than a week there was an apparent halt in the progress of the illness. One would have thought that death was not daring to strike him who was awaiting its coming with perfect submission, great calmness, and in full possession of all his faculties. He talked of it as an exile of his beloved fatherland on the eve of his return there.

He entertained the hope of completing his exile on the following Saturday - Our Lady's day. He had loved Her so much his whole life long, he had served Her with such an intense generosity that he would have liked to close his life as he had begun it - under the kindly glance and gentle smile of his good Mother. After the example of many of the saints, he had desired and asked for the favour of dying on a Saturday. He set all things in order, so that when his divine Mother should call him, without any other preoccupation he could reply, "Here I am, all ready."

On the days following the reception of the last Sacraments, he wanted to say farewell to his curates, to the Fathers and to his friends. He had a kindly word for all, and to each he gave some last advice, a word of encouragement, a request for prayers for his soul after death.

When the turn of his infirmarian came, he who for five years had cared for him day and night with the affectionate tenderness of a son, he thanked him warmly for all his services and the incessant fatigue so generously supported for so long in the effort to make him comfortable. Then, remembering certain signs of impatience which, the excess of his sufferings had wrung from him, he asked pardon so humbly, that the infirmarian was speechless with emotion. Falling on his knees he asked for the venerated father's blessing, which he gave with fatherly kindness, asking him to assist him right to the end and to pray for him after death.

Let us allow an eye-witness to complete the account. He says:

"On Sunday the 13th, and on the following days, I had the happiness of celebrating Mass in his room, and giving him Holy Communion. Our good Father was wonderful in his recollection. He kept his eyes fixed on the altar, and followed attentively the ceremonies of the Mass. I wish I could express the sentiments of faith and love which filled his priestly soul in the Presence of the Sovereign Priest come to strengthen him but

our good Father was silent as usual about the favours which he received. So I can only tell you of what appeared in his exterior. I will never forget the impression made on me by his fervour during the holy Sacrifice.

On the 17th, the Feast of Saint Margaret Mary, towards whom he had a great devotion, I gave him Holy Communion. This was the last of his life. On the following days he was so weak that he could scarcely swallow a few drops of liquid to relieve his burning thirst.

After the Mass, I approached his bed of suffering. "You remember, Father, that today, the meetings of the Archconfraternity recommence at the Basilica. It is six years today since they were stopped by the persecution." "Yes, yes, I know," he said. He was too weak to say more.

Then an ineffable smile and a holy joy lit up his thin face, and said what his lips could not pronounce. His eyes raised towards Heaven showed me the happiness he felt, and his gratitude to the Sacred Heart for this last consolation.

The morning brought a slight improvement. After having taken a little nourishment, as he felt stronger, he manifested a desire to get up. They placed him in his armchair where he stayed several hours. Then, on the instances of his infirmarian, he consented to return to bed. He did not leave it again.

From this time till his death - Thursday, 17th, till Monday the 21st - his sufferings increased and all remedies failed to give any relief. The extreme pain reduced him to such weakness that he could only express himself in monosyllables or by signs. However, in spite of his sufferings, he remained conscious until the last moments. He gave proofs of this by a word or by an affectionate pressing of the hand and this encouraged us to invocations to help him to keep his thoughts united with the Heart of Jesus.

As soon as Father General, who was in Rome, heard of the gravity of his state, he begged the Holy Father's blessing. Pius X granted it with paternal kindness, promising himself also to pray for the beloved invalid. This blessing and promise of prayers were received with joy and gratitude by our Father.

The Holy Father's concern did not stop at this favour. As soon as he was informed of the death of Father Chevalier, he had a letter sent to Father General expressing his sympathy in our sorrow, and promising prayers for the repose of his soul.

However, the illness rapidly completed its course. Monday, the 21st October was the day on which God willed to Himself his faithful servant. Our Superior General, Father Meyer, had set out in haste from Rome and arrived at Issoudun during the night. In the early morning he went to Father Chevalier, who recognised him and had even the strength to bless

him. Father Meyer did not leave him again. Towards midday a crisis seemed to indicate the end. Father Meyer had the Community assembled and recited the prayers for the dying. At three o'clock there was a fresh crisis, and after that he remained for more than two hours in great calm, as if in a peaceful sleep. Then, like the flickering out of a light he fell peacefully asleep in the Lord. The clock struck half-past five and the evening Angelus was ringing in the parish.

Thus died our beloved Father Founder. He had lived 83 years, 6 months and 6 days, and the greater part - 53 years - had by a special design of Divine Providence been spent in the town of Issoudun.

His funeral was more like a triumphal procession than a funeral. More than one hundred priests, the majority of the canons of the Metropolitan Church, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries from the neighbouring dioceses, two Vicars General from Bourges, and an immense crowd followed his mortal remains.

And now he rests in the crypt of the Basilica. He lies there below the altar dedicated to our divine Mother, and almost under the feet of Her holy image, before which so many fervent pilgrims come to pray, and where he himself loved to pour out his soul before the incomparable Treasurer of the Heart of Jesus, Her whom he loved to call the Advocate of difficult and hopeless cases.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me shall yet live."

Beloved Father, this Basilica, all the works born of your great heart are witness to the greatness of your faith. You, therefore, yet live. But henceforth you live in the Adorable Heart Which was the Centre of your whole life and is now your Recompense for all eternity. You live close to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart whom you have so much loved and glorified. You have entered into the joy of your Lord.

And we, your children, hear a voice from Heaven saying to us, as to the angel of the Apocalypse, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Lord, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow them." It is the voice of Our Lady realising for you the words which Holy Church puts on the lips of the Blessed: "Those who make Me known will have life everlasting."
