

THE LATE MOTHER TERESA OF LORETTO.

I HAVE much pleasure in submitting to your readers this little labor of love, in which I wish to bring before the public one of the quiet workers who was, in her way, a benefactress to her country, concerned as she was in the temporal as well as the eternal welfare of all who found a shelter beneath her fostering care.

The chief difficulty always with secular writers of a religious life is to compass the great chasm in thought and feeling between their dwarfed soul and that of their subject, though this in the main embarrasses me, I may not use it as a plea altogether for the shortcomings of the sketch. Conscious of the disadvantage I am under in endeavoring to write a biography without having enjoyed personal contact with my subject, yet as greatness is too easily recognisable this need not be a necessary condition for apprehending it—and in the short synopsis of the life and labors of Mother Teresa, which I have had from various sources, I could well glean the quality of her uncommon character.

Besides this my delightful encounter with her descendants has made the example she gave easy to conceive and appreciate. It goes without saying surely—from the bare facts of a life like Mother Teresa's that her trend of thought, and will, and work, was wholly spiritual. No one can need to be persuaded of this, but it does require in justice to her, and for the honor of the family that survives her, to have it shown that her work was distinctly in its incipency and continues to be its progression a great public benefit, and in a young country like this a sort of memorable historic movement. Being of the world myself, I do not feel guilty of slander when I say, it is fearfully impatient of the moneyed records of the ecstasies and rapt recollectedness of even the greatest saints. It is only too ready to take their sanctity for granted, but it wants to be persuaded of their utility and their active sense of the inter-dependence of human beings. This is a very heavy defense is, it not? But I feel I must explain my attitude fully, and I have a presumptuous feeling that Mother Teresa herself, if I may judge from the spirit of reasonable compromise which is manifest in her Community, would not dissent from the principle I go upon in these matters. I trust my little sketch will fulfil its mission, to install in the minds of my readers a love and admiration for the saintly and eminently useful Mother Teresa, and for the life of self-immolation and public benefit of the fast growing community who are following in her foot steps.

"The woman's duty as a member of the commonwealth," says Ruskin, "is to assist in the ordering, in the comforting and in the beautiful adornment of the State." Any woman, therefore, who performs this triple function, has perfectly fulfilled her obligations of citizenship and merits the gratitude and praise of the country she has served. We hear a great deal about the tributes, which, as a nation, we owe to legislators and philanthropists, to scholars, artists, and inventors—even the Canadian Temple of Hero-worship has its crowded niches now—but we do not hear so much about "the quiet workers, by whom a nation lives and never thanks them." We have written down upon the immortal scroll of history the lustrous names of our patriots and public benefactors, shall we consent to see the most faithful of all our national stewards—our saints—go unhonored and unsung into obscurity? One of these, the subject of this sketch, unquestionably was, and perhaps it were well, before we go into the details of her life and labors to remember that there is a salient difference between the toilers in the national vineyard who are saints, and those who are not, that the latter concern themselves merely about the temporal welfare of the people, while the former are deeply solicitous for their interests here and in the world to come. And if the care for the mere earthly advancement of a constituency, a province or a nation, entails the unremitting labor and anxiety which we concede to it, how much more, in common proportion, does not the farther-reaching scheme of him involve, who, by the choice of a more exalted state of life, makes himself partially responsible for the destinies of soul and body of the multitudes committed to his care!

In Ellen Dease, the late Reverend Mother (Teresa) of the Loretto Order in America, Canada possessed one of those quiet workers indeed "by whom the nation lives and never thanks." Her name is inalienable from the great cause of higher female education in the West, and this in itself, a glorious epitome of her services to the commonwealth, commends her to the homage and gratitude of a country whose educational growth is a marvel to the old centres of learning. In her life the comprehensive proverb, *noblesse oblige* has an ample illustration. The best blood of Westmeath, Longford and Cavan flowed in her veins, the rich blood of the O'Reilly's and Dease's, the proud blood of the Nugent's, of Count Nugent, the distinguished refugee whose Austrian honors are a protest for all times against the unspeakable Penal Laws that drove him from his own land to gather laurels of honorable distinction in that of a stranger. *Noblesse oblige* indeed, the touchstone of true nobility, is in noble effort and noble achievement, and with this triple claim to the rare prerogative es-

tablished so that he who runs may read, we are safe in presenting Ellen Dease to posterity as a type of that most perfect of creatures—the noble woman! She was born in the County of Meath on the fourth day of May, 1821, launched into the world as any other baby-girl, and yet what a train of vast potentialities her humble coming generated! It may be that the sun rose bright and glad some over our fair Queen City on that eventful morning, beaming with tidings of great joy because of the significance of her birth to its prospective needs and development, it may be that the birds sang and the peaceful waters of the lake glancing in the ample sunshine bore the message on to the neighboring towns and cities which were to come within the pale of her future energies. It was the season of bud and blossom, the maples were putting out their tender leaflets, the trilliums and violets were peeping through the brown mould of the forests, the lilacs were swinging their laden boughs like censurs in the cool, balmy morning, and responsive to their sweet appeals this May-flower of Meath nodded to them from over the sea. She would come to them in the course of time redolent of love and friendship, and bloom forevermore among them in the nation's virgin garden.

The childhood and girlhood of Miss Dease were not more thrilling nor interesting than these epochs usually are, indeed, we are relieved to discover that her traits and tendencies during these periods were of the most ordinary character, for this divests her entirely of that unkindred aspect which holiness too commonly assumes to the rank and file of men. When we see reflected in the embryo saint the same needs and cares and struggles, and can detect a trend towards the same weaknesses and temptations as are the source and secret of our discouragement and spiritual unfruitfulness, our interest and sympathy are far more readily and keenly excited than when we find ourselves scanning with a half-sceptical indifference the records of preternatural emotions and achievements which so stain the bond of brotherhood between us and many holy persons. Any Catholic child brought up in the atmosphere of a happy home, and any drudging school-girl wrestling with the dull tasks and tiresome discipline of the classroom can find a boon-companion and a fellow-toiler in little Ellen Dease. We are left to assume that she smudged as many pinafores and rent as many frocks and got into as many difficulties generally as any small woman in the country, and of course we love her all the better for it.

In the fashionable institute at Dublin where her private home-training received its finishing touches, we see her in a new but still very natural phases of physical and moral development, the vagrant aims and fancies of youth are becoming submerged in the earnestness of early womanhood, experience is widening the horizon of merely taught knowledge, the world is revealing itself in its protean character of friend and foe to her young mind and heart. This is the crisis of a woman's life, from this point the ways of Eve's daughters diverge in all climes and ages, past this milestone of maidenhood they go, happy and fresh and fair, to pleasure or prayer or toil, to lay up treasures of one sort or another, to seek happiness in one shape or another, before their paths converge again at the milestone marked *Ci-gib*.

Miss Dease, with the broad road of lawful ease and pleasures accessible to her by reason of her birth and social standing, had a tempting prospect ahead of her, but so strangely far-seeing and courageous can a woman of four and twenty be, she donned the sombre garment of votive penance and toil, and went instead down the narrow byway of Renunciation. To say that she forsook the world, would hardly be a fair construction to put upon her choice; she must have loved it indeed to have given herself entirely to the one thing, upon which its welfare must ever depend, the propagation of Christian faith and knowledge among those who held the destinies of nations in their hands. To this end she repaired to Rathfarnham, near Dublin, where she was received on the 15th of October, in the year 1845, into the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the Order of Loretto, by the Reverend Mother Ball, herself a distinguished and holy woman. This community had had a quasi-historic and romantic origin. Hunted by the fanatical oppression of Charles I.'s reign, a number of wealthy Catholic families left their homes and retreated to the continent for a shelter from their persecutors. France and Spain, of course, received many of them, and one party of noble ladies drifted into Munich where the Bishop and Duke of Bavaria extended them a royal welcome. Finding themselves thus happily cared for, the valiant women resolved to organize themselves into a regular community and devote themselves to the education of young persons of their own sex and station, and in this seemingly fortuitous determination the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary had its origin. It was in or about the year 1631.

The Convent at Rathfarnham, whither Miss Dease repaired, was a branch of the old parent house at York, and was opened by Mother Francis Ball while Ellen Dease was still a child. Mother Ball was herself of gentle birth and had been educated in the Abbey at York, for there were, at that perturbed and unhappy period of Ireland's history, no such institutions in that persecuted country. Well qualified by her own keen and delicate instructions to gauge the character of the new novice, Mother Ball received her with marked cordiality, and Miss Dease was admitted, full of fervor and