

BLESSED GERARD MAJELLA.

Lay Brother of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

As we had occasion to speak of the Triduum celebrated in honor of blessed Gerard in a recent number, a hasty glance at the life of this holy brother will not, it is hoped, be uninteresting to the reader.

Blessed Gerard Majella may be said to be one of the grandest phenomena of the Church of the eighteenth century. He is in fact one of the purest and most cultivated flowers of Catholic mysticism; one of those great, incomprehensible souls whose deeds—miracles—and whose life constitute an uninterrupted intercourse with heaven. He is one of those brilliant stars that appear from time to time in the firmament of the Church and usually exercise a powerful influence over men whom the night of infidelity threatens to overtake.

In Basilicate, a province of the kingdom of Naples, on the slope of the Appennines, in a most charming spot, lies the little town of Muro. In the course of centuries there came forth from this pretty little town many able men, who shed lustre on their native place by the splendour of their piety, their reputation for learning, and even by the laurels which they had gathered on the battle field. Perhaps never in Muro was there born a child that was destined in so extraordinary a manner by sanctity and power of miracles to become the joy of its native place as the child known later on as Brother Gerard Majella. This child was born on the 6th of April, 1726. Gerard's parents were poor in this world's goods, and were obliged by the work of their hands to support their children. Of the four surviving children Gerard was by far the most pious; and his perfect innocence, united to a lively faith, merited for him many heavenly favors. Gerard was hardly five years old when, kneeling one day before a statue of the Blessed Virgin in a small solitary church dedicated to our Blessed Lady of Capotignagno, he sees the Infant Jesus leaving the arms of His mother, and after having engaged with him for some time in child-like play, gave him a small, dazzling white loaf of bread. When he was seven years old, his heart longed to receive his Jesus in Holy Communion. One morning, assisting at Mass, he presented himself at the altar railing to receive his Jesus with the rest of the faithful. But on account of his tender age he was refused. The following night, however, his patron, St. Michael, gave him the Divine Blood which the priest had refused him the day before.

The first decade of Gerard's life had passed away, and with it the purely paradisiacal period came to an end. Side by side with all the graces and favors of heaven, that which played in his after life the principal part is—the Cross. About this time death took away his good father. He was apprenticed to a tailor, that he might learn the trade of his father and become the support of his family. Gerard sees himself maltreated by the foreman of the workshop, a brutal, unprincipled man, but he bears up with invincible patience. A little later on he enters the service of a man of very churlish disposition, and here again the principal virtue he had to practice was patience. So ill-tempered and harsh was this man towards his servants, that hardly any one was found willing to enter his service. Gerard, however, joyfully embraced this opportunity to practice self-denial, and served this repulsive man for three years with great cheerfulness.

When his master died the thought of forsaking the world and entering a more perfect state of life took possession of his soul. Meanwhile the time was approaching when Gerard should see his most ardent wish fulfilled, and

should reach the haven of the religious state. The religious society for which God had destined him as one of its first and brightest ornaments was the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In 1748 the Redemptorists gave a mission in his native place. Gerard was not long in recognizing the excellent spirit which animated these missionaries, and he held them in such esteem that he begged to be admitted as a lay brother to their order. The Superior, however, perceiving his emaciated countenance and wasted figure, and considering him unable to sustain the onerous duties required by the Institute, refused to receive him. But what avails human prudence against the bold and inventive love of the Saints? Gerard repeatedly asks to be admitted as a lay brother. His poor mother undertook to combat Gerard's heart with the weapons of maternal tenderness, and begged him several times, with tears in her eyes, not to abandon her who was his mother. Yet as much as he loved his mother; he loved still more the Beloved of his Soul. Bidding a last farewell to his father's house he begs once more to be received. At last his request is acceded to, and he is received into the religious order. Thus, in the year 1749, Gerard began his religious life.

Gerard lived but five years after he became a Redemptorist; but what years! One is filled with wonder to read in his life all that he did in such a short space of time. To speak in the language of Rome: "From his infancy Gerard was united to Jesus Christ, the true spiritual vine. In his youth he was still more intimately united to Him, but as a religious he united himself perfectly to the Divine Lover of souls." Henceforth, to use our Lord's own words, "this fruitful branch bore abundant fruit"—fruits of virtue.

The virtues most necessary for a lay brother, said St. Alphonsus, are humility, obedience and patience. Gerard was a model of these virtues. Behold this humble lay brother how he works without complaining in the different houses of the order; anything is good enough for him; the most menial labors, cast off garments, acts of obedience the most unheard of. He was obliged to submit to many a reprimand, not that he deserved them, but God, wishing him to become a perfect disciple in the School of the Cross, sent many severe trials. Is he compelled to walk on the thorny road of mortification—he is happy. Does obedience bid him leave the solitude of the cloister to mix with the noisy world—he does it most cheerfully. Are his inclinations contradicted—he recalls to mind his humble origin in the midst of the favors God showers upon him. He is the first to humble himself; he seeks humiliations and they come to him; but not a murmur, not a complaint escapes his lips, for he is happy in the midst of all.

His obedience was great because it was blind. His superiors had to be careful in giving him commands, for he carried them out to the very letter. He creeps into the oven of a baker's shop when he is told in a jocular manner "Va Finforma!" "Go, and creep into the oven." A lady hears of this and laughs at what she calls a foolish and extravagant act, but it was not long before she had to have recourse to this poor fool's (as she called him) intercession. His virtue is often put to the test by a very strict Superior, but his humility is only equalled by his obedience. In a word, any one may give him a command, and he obeys immediately.

Patience is another virtue which he practised in an heroic manner. Gerard was not always closed up in the convent. He is appointed to be a gatherer of alms; he occasionally acts as peace-maker between families; he goes from door to door collecting for his convent.

Surely he has opportunities enough in these various avocations to practice this virtue—to bear up with injuries.

One day he was brutally beaten by a farmer. But Gerard's meekness disarms the ruffian. He asked him to place him on his horse and accompany him home. When both arrive at the convent, he begs the Superior to reward the man for his kindness, whilst he himself lavishes on him all manner of kindness, though he had broken the poor brother's ribs with the butt end of his musket. Later on in life a more terrible trial awaits him. The venomous tooth of calumny attacks his honor, for a terrible accusation is brought against him. He can easily justify himself, but he does not. When his innocence became manifest, St. Alphonsus asked him why he remained silent under the calumny. He merely answered: "My Father, I have sworn to keep my rule, and that rule forbids me to excuse myself." One can easily understand why St. Alphonsus said later on: "Gerard was a prodigy of regular observance."

The love of God produces love of men. Who is a saint if it be not he who loves God with his whole heart, and his neighbor as himself? Blessed Gerard showed his for God and for his neighbor by the wonderful conversions he wrought, the reconciliations of enemies he brought about, and the wonderful cures he performed. His renown as a miracle worker was so great that it preceded him wherever he went, and crowds flocked from all sides to seek his aid.

The poor, however, were the especial objects of his love. For them he worked the most stupendous miracles. Fishermen's boats were miraculously saved. In distributing bread to the poor it multiplied in his hand, armed with the Sign of the Cross: little children, and mothers in cases of difficult confinements, are the special object of his care. Even now a days at Foggia, and wherever he is best known, pregnant women have a picture of him, and invoke his name with devotion. Who can tell how many poor sinners he converted from their evil ways? What scandals did he not prevent? Justly has he merited the title of Apostle—a title which he received even during life.

This is but a very meagre sketch of a life that was short in years, but full of merit before God. Gerard was only 29 years 6 months and 7 days when he was summoned to his reward. Well may we apply to him the words of Holy Writ: "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."

A Feathered Freak.

A strange bird which has attracted the attention of hundreds of people, is on exhibition on the farm of John Rodabaugh, a farmer living six miles east of St. Mary's, Ohio. The bird resembles an owl very much in form, has a head shaped like a heart, the face of a monkey, a snowy white fur adorning its face, while the feathers are of a beautiful and delicate yellowish gray, with the tail of a turkey. The bird was caught a few weeks ago while the family were returning home from church, and not until it had received a load of shot did it allow itself to be taken captive, and then its captor was fearfully lacerated in the fight that ensued. It utters a noise similar to that of a pig, and it feeds wholly on small birds, which it takes into its beak alive, throwing out the bones and feathers afterwards.

Bickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup stands at the head of the list for all diseases of the throat and lungs. It acts like magic in breaking up a cold. A cough is soon subdued, tightness of the chest is relieved, even the worst case of consumption is relieved, while in recent cases it may be said never to fail. It is a medicine prepared from the active principles or virtues of several medicinal herbs, and can be depended upon for all pulmonary complaints.

The Year 1893.

The year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-three will rank as one of the most notable in the cycle of the nineteenth century. No man of commanding genius—military, literary or artistic—has risen on the horizon and shone among his fellows to mark its annals. Such there may be among us, but as yet we know him not. No great war has devastated any country in Europe, Asia, Africa, or the New World. The volatile republics of South America have kept the revolutionary irons in the fire all the time, it is true, *we ourselves have had a little war in Africa, not altogether to our liking, while our French neighbors have had some trouble in Siam.* But these events were partly accidental and evanescent, and are not to be regarded as of historical importance. What then is to mark out 1893 from the ninety-two years that have preceded it in this country? We should say it is the fact of the giant of democracy being awakened from his slumbers in this year of grace. He is just now rubbing his eyes; the beginning of the next century will surely find them fully opened. Although this new force in social and industrial life has a giant's strength, it is not going to use it, as in the French Revolution, with a giant's perversity. There is now a wider and more perfect recognition of the rights of all classes. At the same time in the numerous strikes that have occurred during the course of the year there was apparent one element of supreme danger—a tendency to class selfishness. The men who labor with their hands do their part, but only their part, of the world's work. The engineer in his study, the chemist in his laboratory the inventor among his models, and even the capitalist in his counting-house, negotiating those bills which make international commerce possible, also do their share, and their work deserves grateful recognition. Selfishness on the part of labor is as detrimental to the best interests of mankind as the selfishness of capital. In fact, there is no difference between them.—*Liverpool Catholic Times.*

A Deserted Capital.

In the course of his tour in Upper Burma the Viceroy of India visited Pagan, the capital of other days, which stands on the left bank of the Irrawaddy, its colossal temples and pagodas telling of the glory of former centuries. A thousand buildings, still imposing in their immensity, extend for six or eight miles along the river front, with a breadth of from two to three miles. The city is deserted, its only occupants being jackals and wild dogs, and presents a spectacle of desolation and decay which is almost appalling. Some of the chief pagodas are kept in repair by wealthy Buddhists, but most of them are crumbling to ruin. The Viceroy ascended a lofty pagoda, from which he obtained a view up and down the broad Irrawaddy, with its picturesque and indented banks.

A Simple way to help Poor Catholic Missions.

Save all cancelled postage stamps of every kind and country and send them to Rev. P. M. Barral, Hammoncton, New Jersey. Give at once your address, and you will receive with the necessary explanation a nice Souvenir of Hammoncton Missions.

Let our old age be childlike, and our childhood like old age; that we may be wise without being proud, and humble without being ignorant.—*St. Augustine*

Grease may be taken out of carpet by covering the spot with powdered French chalk, laying soft brown paper over the spot, and covering with a warm iron.

Mr. Thomas Power, of Parade House, Kilkenny, has been sworn in as High Sheriff of the city; and, subsequently, Mr. Alec. J. McCreery was re-sworn as Undersheriff.

If one wishes to cool a hot dish in a hurry, it will be found that if the dish be placed in a vessel full of cold salt water, it will cool more rapidly than if it stood in water free from salt.