

Divine espousals are so essentially characteristic of convent visions that they are always the favourite point attacked by those who sit in the seat of the scornful outside the cloisters. The adverse formulary says that the devotion of all celibates is only the parental instinct of self-sacrifice gone astray, and that a Divine Spouse is only a nun's hysterical substitute for a more carnal object of affection. But this contemptuous view shuts out one obviously common-sense point of refutation, which is almost too profanely worldly-wise for mention here. It simply is that no woman would make it the object of her life to bring in as many other brides as possible for her own beloved spouse, unless her affections were truly spiritual and the object of them divinely infinite.

Opinions will always differ about the signs which mark the calling of a life apart. But all the world agrees that the essential fitness of such a life for the higher aspirations of mankind can only be tested by its resultant actions. So we, who are bent merely on estimating the good influence that La Mère Marie exerted on Canadian history, might judge her by her works alone, if it were not that her visions, faith and works together made a triune all-in-all. This being so, we cannot hope to understand any one part of her life, if we wrest it from the whole. We must reckon with faith and vision as practical determinants at every turn. And, to gain a still further insight into her peculiar case, we must call such a supremely competent witness of the beatific state as St. Theresa, whose evidence goes far to prove, by sympathetic analogy at least, how close the psychic correlations are, even if the visions be only subjectively existent. In the 28th chapter of her autobiography she gives her conclusion of the whole matter: "Like imperfect sleep, which, instead of giving more strength to the head, leaves it only the more exhausted, mere imaginings only weaken the soul. . . . A genuine heavenly vision yields her a harvest of ineffable spiritual riches, and an admirable renewal of bodily strength. I gave these reasons to those people who so often accused my visions of being the work of the enemy of mankind and the sport of my imagination. . . . I showed them the jewels which the divine hand left with me—they were my actual dispositions. All those that knew me saw that I was changed. . . . As for myself, it was impossible to believe that if the devil were the author of this change he could have used means so contrary to his own interests as the uprooting of my vices and the filling me with masculine courage; for I saw clearly that a single vision was enough to enrich me with all that wealth."

When she was thirty and her son twelve, La Mère Marie committed him to the Jesuits and entered the Ursuline convent of Tours. The nuns