

to the poor, teaching men to love God and serve one another, and accomplishing more for the cause of religion and humanity than any other influence of the Middle Ages. It was Francis Bernardone, better known by the title of Saint Francis of Assisi.

During the year 1894 two elaborate biographies of this saint were given to the world, royal octavo volumes of 500 pages each. The first to appear is written by Paul Sabatier, of Strasbourg, a book richly eloquent, broadly philosophic and intelligently reverent. An ideal Protestant biography. The second is by the Abbe Leon Le Monnier, of Paris. It is dedicated to the Pope, and has received his formal benediction. It is chaste in style, reverent in spirit, traditional in method. It is a work of faith rather than of philosophy. An ideal Roman Catholic biography of a saint who belongs to the Church universal.

Yet the two biographies, both of them masterly, and written from different standpoints, are in fundamental agreement. Le Monnier presents more wonders for our acceptance, Sabatier seeks a more rational explanation of the wonders he admits. Le Monnier exalts the Church as having power to produce such saints. Sabatier exalts the universal grace which goes on producing saintliness of character in spite of the Church's gross unfaithfulness. Both admit the fact of the Stigmata. Le Monnier ascribes them to miracle, Sabatier is at a loss how to account for them. But the man Francis, the good confession he made, the noble life he lived, the great service he rendered, the profound and wide-reaching influence he exerted, stands out on the pages of both as one of the holiest and noblest souls of the Nineteen Christian Centuries.

Let us proceed to make the acquaintance of the man.

Francis was born at Assisi, a town on the slopes of the Apennines, in Central Italy, in the year 1182. His father was a merchant, whose trade took him to and fro between Italy and France at frequent intervals, and in which he accumulated a large fortune. From one of these trips he returned with a French bride, and when their first child was born he was named, in honour of his mother's native land, Francis.

It was planned that the son should tread in the steps of his enterprising father. He was trained for the market-place from the first, though he received some tuition in letters, and in the doctrines of the Church at a neighbouring church school. As he grew older he became what would to-day be considered decidedly wild. His more orthodox biographers are disposed to gloss over the follies of the great saint's youth, but it remains a fact, quite patent to the thoughtful reader, that Francis in his early twenties was passionately addicted to pleasure and drank deep of its dissipations.

Being of a very gay and generous disposition, and abundantly supplied with money, he was naturally a leader among the gilded youth of the period, providing entertainments for them that were both lavish and frequent. If his father had not been making money rapidly the expenditure of young Francis would surely have run him into bankruptcy, for he kept up the style of a prince, and squandered gold with both hands. In business, however, he was so bright and successful a salesman as to suggest the question whether his spendthrift ways were not a piece of business enterprise, a kind of genteel advertising which paid well. At any rate his father saw in