

The Jesuits

THE REV. A. W. PARSONS

I—THEIR FOUNDER

"Prim friend with the black serge gown, with the rosary, scapulary, and I know not what other spiritual block-and-tackle—scowl not on me . . . for I swear thou art my brother, in spite of rosaries and scapularies; and I recognize thee, though thou canst not me; and with love and pity know thee for a brother, though enchanted into the condition of a spiritual mummy. Hapless creature, curse me not; listen to me, and consider—perhaps even thou wilt escape from mummyhood, and become once more a living soul." (Jesuitism, in Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets*.)

PRIOR to the establishment of the Jesuit order the Papacy had fallen on evil days. The celebrated German historian Griesinger wrote (*History of the Jesuits*, 1892, p. 55), "It could not be denied that even in Rome itself more heathenism than Christianity prevailed and so little awe was there for the Almighty among men, that, as a proof thereof, in lonely churches a dog might even be seen chained to the high altar to protect the deeply venerated property and prevent the Pyx being stolen out of the Tabernacle. . . . Spain and Italy were smothered in ignorance and sloth, Germany through Luther, France through Calvin, Switzerland through Zwingle and England through its own King showed a great falling away from the Catholic faith; every day added to the number of heretics as well as heresies." John Bunyan's quaint description of Giant Pope was never more true than at this crisis in the history of the Papacy. "Though he be yet alive, he is, by reason of age and also of the many shrewd brushes that he met with in his younger days, grown so crazy and stiff in his joints, that he can do little more than sit in his cave's mouth, grinning at the pilgrims as they go by and biting his nails because he cannot come at them."

THE REFORMATION

The Reformation had entered into the life and worship of the Church. A new light was breaking on the eyes of men. A new life was stirring in their souls. It was clear that, if left alone, Protestantism would achieve a victory so complete that it would be vain for any opposing power to think of renewing the contest. It was further clear that armies would never effect its overthrow. Other weapons must be forged and other warriors mustered than those which Charles V of Spain and Francis I of France had been accustomed to lead into the field. These two monarchs had united all their forces against the Reformation, but in 1521, Francis I, on the pretence of restoring the King of Navarre's children to their patrimony, made war against Charles V and had sent into Navarre an army whose rapid conquests were only stopped before the fortress of Pampeluna. Within its strong walls was one, Don Iñigo Lopez de Recalde, who was destined to kindle an enthusiasm which would breathe into the Papacy a new spirit of energy, devotion and control.

THE LEADER

Ignatius Loyola, as he is usually called, was a Spaniard by race and a soldier by profession. Brought up at the magnificent and voluptuous court of Ferdinand of Spain he was imbued with the chivalrous and martial spirit which characterized his time and with the dissipation and folly which were the distinguishing marks of the Spanish Courtier of that period. Born in 1491, the future founder of the Jesuits became a soldier in 1517, the very year in which Luther began his battle against Papal abuses by nailing his theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg. The Governor of Navarre had gone into Spain to procure assistance. He had entrusted the defence of Pampeluna to Loyola and a few nobles. Some of these nobles, seeing the superiority of the French troops, resolved to withdraw, but Loyola was determined to hold the citadel at the peril of his life even though he did it single-handed. He was soon joined by others, and while fighting with great bravery, rage and fury he was severely wounded in the right leg by a cannon ball and the garrison immediately surrendered. The French, in admiration of their youthful opponent, carried him in a litter to his parents in the castle

of Loyola where he had been born and from whence he afterwards derived his name. It is interesting to notice another coincidence. Luther also had been obliged to leave public warfare after his brave stand at the Diet of Worms and had retired to the castle at Wartburg. He was occupied in the glorious task of translating the Bible into German; whilst Loyola, while recovering from his sickness was reading a Spanish Romance called *Flos Sanctorum*. This book produced an extraordinary effect upon the sick man. The noisy life of tournaments and battles which hitherto had occupied his thoughts now seemed less important than the humble actions of God's saints. Their heroic sufferings appeared to him to be far more worthy of praise than all the high feats of arms and chivalry. He no longer wished to be a great soldier—he desired to be a saint and the founder of a new religious order in the Church modelled on military lines. "Gradually," says the *Catholic Dictionary*, "the thought of founding an order which would support the Chair of Peter, menaced by German heretics, sustain by example, preaching and education, the cause of the Gospel and Catholic Truth, and carry the light of Christ to the heathen, rose into his mind." Fülöp-Miller, in *The Power and Secret of the Jesuits* (1930), p. 41, adds: "One night he raised himself from his couch and knelt down before the picture of the Virgin in the corner of the room and solemnly promised from then on to serve as a faithful soldier under the banner of Christ. It was, however, a long time before the vain courtier succeeded in attaining real sincerity; and even in the most subtle forms of the expression of Loyola's later piety there was some trace of that superficiality which had completely governed the conduct of the erstwhile frivolous knight."

As a Knight he had dedicated the valour of his arms to some lady. He now determined that he would become the "Knight of the Virgin Mary." No sooner were his wounds healed than he went to some lonely cells excavated by Benedictine monks of the Monastery of Montserrat. There he associated himself with the poor and the sick, and tried to make himself like them in his clothing, speech and appearance. He neglected his body and allowed his hair and beard to grow; he never washed, and he covered himself with the dirtiest of rags. He did not, however, succeed in making

the beggars regard him as one of themselves ; on the contrary, they ridiculed him when he came amongst them in his shabby cowl, a bread-sack over his shoulder and a great rosary round his neck. In the streets the boys pointed at him and shouted after him the jeering words, "Father Sack."

He scourged himself three times a day, using a chain spiked with iron. He passed seven hours daily on his knees. He rose to pray at midnight. He became seriously ill and had to be taken unconscious to the house of Dona Angelica de Amigant, his patroness, who lived in Manresa. The doctors who were called in despaired of his life, and some pious ladies asked that they might be given pieces of his clothing as relics. Dona Angelica, wishing to gratify their desire, opened Inigo's cupboard in order to take out the clothes of him they believed dead ; soon afterwards she returned terrified, for in the wardrobe hung the most terrible weapons of mortification : a girdle into which wire had been worked, heavy chains, nails strung together in the form of a cross, and an undergarment interwoven with small iron thorns. All these he wore next his skin !

When he recovered he once more resumed his beggar's garb and his appearance is described as " perfectly horrible." When he appeared in the streets he was followed by a crowd of boys who bespattered him with rotten eggs and mud. Day and night gloomy terrors haunted him. He wandered about dejected and miserable. His bed was drenched with tears and his bitter groans and sighs resounded along the monastic cloisters.

LUTHER AND LOYOLA

Was there at this time any difference between the state of the souls of the monk of Manresa and the monk of Erfurt ? Each was under deep conviction of sin. Each longed for reconciliation with God. If a Staupitz, with the Bible in his hand, had appeared in the convent of Manresa, possibly Ignatius might have lived to become the Luther of Spain. There was no faithful guide, however, to point him to the " Lamb of God " Whose blood " cleanseth from all sin." He could not, like Luther, read Latin, and therefore, the Bible was a closed book to him. Instead of looking upon his penitent feelings as mercifully sent by God to lead him to Himself, he persuaded himself that they were delusions of

the devil. He felt that all his mortifications, tears, sighs and penances were meritorious and good—in fact, that he was already a great saint. Luther, in similar soul struggles in the cell at Erfurt, had turned to the “light that shineth in a dark place.” Loyola, alas! surrendered himself to visions and revelations. For instance, on the steps of the Church of Manresa, he states, he became aware of “a higher light” which showed him “how God had created the universe.” Then he saw “the Catholic dogma so clearly that he was prepared to die for the doctrine which he had seen in such a manner.” Another day there appeared to him “something white like three keys of a clavichord or an organ,” and immediately he was convinced that this was the Holy Trinity! In the apparition of a white body “not very large and not very small,” he believed he could see “the Person of Christ”; in another similar vision he saw the Virgin Mary. Indeed, he believed that she revealed herself to him about thirty times. “Even had there been no Bible,” say his apologists, “even had these mysteries never been revealed in Scripture he would have believed them, for God had appeared to him.”

In 1523 he visited Rome, but only stayed long enough to get the Pope's permission to travel as a pilgrim to Jerusalem. He arrived there, only to be driven from the city by the Franciscans. Thus withstood he returned to Barcelona where for two years he studied the Latin language, and incidentally reformed a Dominican convent, called the “Convent of Angels.” The Jesuit Bonhours says these nuns were “perfect courtesans” and their scandalous conduct is also mentioned by two other well-known Jesuits. (*Bonhours' Life of St. Ignatius*, p. 70 (1686); *Father Gennelli's Life*, p. 55; *Rose, Life of Loyola*, p. 101). There are good reasons for believing that Loyola, like his followers at the present day, exerted a powerful moral influence upon women, but it is to be feared that it was often only transitory. In 1526 he went to Alcalá. Butler, in the *Lives of the Saints*, July, 1845, p. 379, says: “Here he attended at the same time, lectures in logic, physics and divinity, by which multiplicity he only confounded his own ideas and learned nothing at all though he studied night and day.” He was next tried by the Inquisition on the charge of being a Lutheran! He was “confined to close prison for two and forty days, but declared innocent of any fault by a public sentence” on the

1st day of June, 1527. In spite of this, to quote Butler again : " he and his companions were forbidden to wear any singular habit, or to give any instruction in religious matters, being illiterate persons."

He then removed to Salamanca, but twelve days after his arrival there was again thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition, where he remained for three weeks before he was released. In 1528 he arrived in Paris, where he incurred the suspicion of the Chief Inquisitor, and was obliged to explain his position to him. This time he escaped imprisonment. It was in Paris that he gained his first real converts. These were Peter Faber, Francis Xavier, Lainez, Salmeron, Bobadilla and Rodriguez. These he first of all won to him by certain disinterested services ; then he excited their admiration by the loftiness of his own asceticism ; and finally he fired them with the ambition of sharing with him in the accomplishment of his purpose to found a new religious order which should save the Catholic Church from its enemies. He trained his little " Company of Jesus " by careful discipline. He compelled them to fast for three days and nights. He exacted of them frequent confession. He enjoined on them severe bodily mortifications. By such means he sought to make them dead to every passion save that of the " Holy War " in which they were to bear arms as Soldiers of Jesus and Knights of Mary. In our next article we hope to give some account of the actual founding of the Jesuit order and of its early history.
