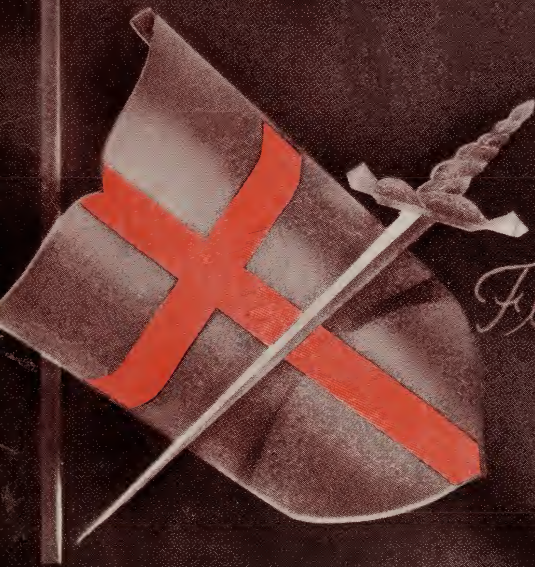


Wedge, Florence
Hero in the strife
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HERO IN THE STRIFE



*By
Florence Wedge*

Price: 20¢

COVER DESIGN

by

**Brother Damian Zelczak, O.F.M.
Pulaski, Wisconsin**

HERO IN THE STRIFE



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Hero in the Strife

St. Louis, King of France

by

Florence Wedge

1955

Franciscan Printery
Pulaski, Wisconsin

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OF SUPERMEN AND SAINTS

This is the write-up of a superman.

Not all supermen wear space helmets and not all spend week-ends exploring the white caps of Mars. Some show off the cross of Christ on their chest, and some spend the eternal years with Him.

They are the real heroes. Bulging muscles and the Atlas build rate a very secondary second with these supermen of saintliness. Their superiority is of the soul. Spiritually they tower head and shoulders above the common herd. They are giants among men.

There is no denying that physical fitness is a precious asset. But too much emphasis on physique is plain fiddlesticks. St. Thomas Aquinas was a powerfully-built man, and St. Christopher is commonly held to have been some sort of colossus. On the other hand, the Apostle Paul is generally represented in Christian art as rather short of stature. Also written in God's book of saints alongside St. John the Baptist, St. John the Almoner, and St. John the Silent, is one St. John the Dwarf — presumably every inch worthy of the surname that has been stuck to him.

Every country has had its supermen of the spirit.

So has every race and every stratum of society. Whereas St. Stephen of Hungary was a monarch, and St. Thomas More a Lord Chancellor, St. Zita was a cook and St. Crispin a shoemaker. Just for the record, let's mention here that St. Benedict Joseph Labre was a wanderer.

Incidentally, Benedict Joseph is one of a vast array of French-born saints. As everyone knows, France is well represented in the halls of eternal glory. Her St. Bernard and his family have overtaken Christ. Her teen-age Joan of Arc died at the stake murmuring the Holy Name. Her Cure of Ars has given an example to priests, that they may walk in a manner befitting their sublime calling. Her Catherine Laboure has given us the Miraculous Medal. Her Therese of the Child Jesus is still showering roses from Paradise in fulfilment of a very daring promise. And the list could be lengthened beyond the limits of a pamphlet.

As might be expected, thirteenth-century France had her superman of the spirit, her hero in the strife, her Galahad of God. His name? Louis. His rank? Royal. His ambition? To leave the world better than he found it and to mold himself into high saintliness. His halo did not drop unexpectedly from the blue. He worked and sweated for it.

It took plenty of pluck and an uncommon degree of staying power, but here was a he-man equipped with a dogged determination to carry through to the end. Louis IX has indeed made his mark in a world where the real tragedy is that sometimes there are more sinners than

saints, more enmities than friendships, more battles than prayers. This highborn son of France has achieved the only success worth striving for year in and year out, namely, the success of sainthood. The honors of the altar came to him within the lifetime of his children.

Children, yes. Eleven of them. This is what makes Louis a fascinating saint, an inspiration for the layfolk, a model for the married. No tonsured cleric he, no meditative monk, no hardy hermit toughing it out in the desert with his passions and his Christ. Louis stayed where God had put him. He is proof positive that holiness is not a product of cloister or monastery, period. When a man has made up his mind to crash the gates of heaven, five sons and six daughters are no handicap. They can be of immense help by giving him chances to practise the whole gamut of Christian virtues. Many a parent has likely been "canonized" thus by his offspring at a time when the Vatican knew next to nothing about him.

BIRTHDAYS, BATTLES, AND THE BIRCH

Louis was the second of eleven children born to Louis VIII, of the Capet line, and Blanche, daughter of King Alfonso of Castile and Eleanor of England. The future saint was born at Poissy on the Seine, a little below Paris, on April 25, 1214.

Old Philip Augustus, reigning king and the baby's grandfather, had ceded the princely manor of Poissy to Louis and Blanche at their marriage. There their first child, Philip, was born in 1209. Five years were to elapse before the birth of the saint-to-be.

Christened at Poissy, Louis in later years liked to sign "Louis of Poissy" on letters and documents. He could never forget Poissy's little parish church in which a priest of God had made him a child of heaven at the baptismal font. There the son of the proud Capetians had been admitted into the dynasty of Christ. It was something a saint would always remember.

Louis was born amidst the clash of arms. He was a mere babe of three months when his father routed

a British army in the Western provinces and his grandfather shattered the strongest coalition that had ever threatened the kingdom. Both Britishers and Germans were so sure of victory that they had proceeded to divide France among themselves as they jolly well pleased — before the combat! But Philip Augustus and his doughty warriors showed them a thing or two at Bouvines, where the allied army collected by the emperor Otto IV and King John of England met with a crushing defeat.

More battles were fought and more victories won, while the son of heir apparent Louis and Blanche grew and waxed strong. Herself a perfect woman all along the line, Blanche meant to train her children in the way they should go. When Philip her first-born died at the age of nine, she determined to instil early in heir presumptive Louis the solid virtues that make human lives sublime. A good king he must be and withal a loyal servant of the Lord of lords.

This practical, sensible woman was well aware that a child is quick to copy grown-ups. Give him the pick of the adult crop to take after, and he will become a man of integrity. Give him people of doubtful morals to walk along with, and he can make you shed more tears than Monica wept over Augustine. Such is the impact of example, whether good or bad, in the hero-worshipping years of childhood and adolescence. This Blanche knew too well not to be very careful in the choice of the men at court. Among these were Bishop Guerin of Senlis, Marshal Clement of Metz, the Count of Rochefort, and Matthew II

of Montmorency. Knights all and grown old in the service of God and country, they ably seconded Blanche in the difficult task of helping a boy over the threshold of childhood into youth and maturity.

Louis had a lot of talent and a lot of sense in his young head. Under capable tutors he early acquired a thorough knowledge of Latin. His genuine liking for the language of the Church explains in part his later enthusiasm for the reading of Holy Scripture and the daily recital of the Divine Office. He likewise learned to write with dignity and grace in the artistic Gothic penmanship so popular in the Middle Ages. A king in embryo, he was also instructed in the arts of war and government and all other kingly accomplishments.

Like any red-blooded youngster he was on friendly terms with all of God's creation. Often enough while Louis was playing in the great, wide, wonderful outdoors, one or another of his teachers started from flowers, trees, or birds, and briefed the born nature-lover in the mysteries of nature fresh from the hands of God. Even the stars above the boy's head and the green grass under his feet were the subject matter of lively, informal chats that Louis took in with great gusto.

Best of all he liked to hang around the stables and make friends with the race horses. In no time at all this boy with comely frame and mop of luxuriant blond hair tumbling across his brow could ride a standardbred like any seasoned cavalryman. Another favorite sport was canoeing all by himself in the spring sunlight on the sparkling

waters of the Seine near his home. He was a regular boy, and led a normal, healthy life.

A prince notwithstanding, nobody raised Louis on a pedestal — not just then. His peccadillos were punished, and he got the feel of the hard wood where it hurt whenever he misbehaved. The birch was always handy. Didn't the Holy Book say something, in effect, about sparing the rod and spoiling the child? And this child, still like potter's clay in the hands of his parents, was destined for something too great to be left to his own whims and devices. Louis and Blanche had too much piety and strong common sense to let the future first lord of France grow up like a wild plant. The watering and hoeing and pruning was their business. They went right ahead, tempering justice with mercy, loving him even as they chastised him.

GOD IN THE SET-UP

Blanche's primary concern, however, was to implant in young Louis a deep reverence for things religious. A man had to have God somewhere in his set-up, else he would fail his manhood. The spirit of faith Blanche had acquired at the eminently Christian court of Castile she now endeavored to foster in her son. The boy remained the same carefree, rollicking youngster, but began to love God as any well-born son loves his dad and to serve Him with the gladness which is the hallmark of heroes in the service of God.

Louis knew what he wanted and he knew how to get it. A saint he would be, not via the sourpuss method — which has yet to produce one authentic *beatus*, — but by the way of gladness and good humor. So he kept smiling and kept plugging in dead earnest.

Luckily he got plenty of help. Everyone at Poissy was behind Christ every hour of every day. Religion to them was no Sunday affair to be slipped on and off like a pair of shoes. It was a full-time privilege. In so favorable a milieu Louis learned from the dawn of reason to love good and shun evil. Sin, his mother taught him, had no place in the life of a real Catholic. No man, not even

a king, could make his own commandments and conveniently break them at his own good pleasure. In words that have made millions think she made it clear to him that death is a much lesser evil than iniquity: "I love you, my dear son, as much as a mother can love her child; but I would rather see you dead at my feet than that you should commit a mortal sin."

Louis never forgot his deeply religious upbringing. His friend and biographer, the *Sieur de Joinville*, relates that on one occasion *Blanche's* son asked him point-blank, "What is God?"

John de Joinville, less a theologian than a soldier, nevertheless knew his heavenly *Who's Who* well enough to score a passing mark. "Sire," he replied, "it is that which is good, so good that there can be nothing better."

Louis wisely decided not to improve on that, and continued with his quizzing. "Well, now, tell me, would you rather be a leper or commit a mortal sin?"

Some alternative. *Joinville* had seen lepers in his day and had not liked the sight. In the Middle Ages lepers were compelled to wear a distinctive form of dress, and to carry a bell or clapper to warn the healthy to keep at a safe distance. *Joinville* had heard that bell and had grimaced each time. The words now tumbled out fast, as Louis stared him in the eyes. "I would rather commit thirty mortal sins than be a leper."

Louis thought otherwise and let the *Sieur* know it. "When a man dies, he is healed of leprosy in his body; but

when a man who has committed a mortal sin dies he cannot know of a certainty that he has in his lifetime repented in such sort that God has forgiven him; wherefore he must stand in great fear, lest that leprosy of sin last as long as God is in Paradise."

Blanche's words had not been wasted on the desert air. Her son had treasured every one of them.

OF CRUSADERS AND KINGS

Happy days were those which the young prince spent at Poissy with his brothers and sisters. The affairs of the kingdom prospered in the skilled hands of his grandfather. Philip Augustus had reformed the administration, had improved the city of Paris on a grand scale, and had consolidated the French monarchy.

Trouble spot at the time was the Holy Land. In his younger days Philip Augustus had joined England's Coeur de Lion in the Third Crusade, but the glorious victory at Acre had achieved little. The treaty which ended the crusade in 1192 secured only the safe access of Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. In the Fifth Crusade the Christians lost what they had won the hard way. John of Brienne, French king of Jerusalem, was ousted from his capital and removed to a smaller town of Palestine. Some time later he sailed off to France to stir up dormant zeal in the hearts of his kinsmen. Could they eat, drink, and be merry while the infidels lorded it over the land hallowed by the presence of the Son of God in the days of His mortal flesh?

It is unthinkable that Blanche should have failed to re-

lay John of Brienne's heartrending plea to her growing son. Louis was between eight and nine when John came to the French court and became friendly with the royal household. In her instructions to the heir presumptive, his truly Christian mother must have often mentioned the name of the Holy City, for whose liberation the best blood of France had been shed. How the lad's heart must have leaped up within him, how blood must have boiled in his veins as he promised to himself that some day he would walk the highways and byways of Palestine, a crusader of the kingly Christ!

Old blood boiled too. Philip Augustus would have given his right eye to be able to fight some more. But old age and its attendant infirmities cautioned against any foolhardy venture of the scope of a Holy Land crusade. His star had begun to fall. So the old warrior offered his heart-break to God — and his soul soon followed. He died in 1223.

The throne passed on to Louis VIII and Blanche of Castile. Louis, as brave as they come, was nevertheless in poor health, and it was feared that he might not long outlive his father. For this reason Blanche stepped up the royal training of their son, so that he might be ready to take over in the event of his father's death or incapacitation.

Shortly after his accession to the throne, Louis VIII and his well-trained men-of-war wrested a few strongholds from the British in the provinces of Poitou and Saintonge. Alarmed and exhausted, the Britishers demanded a four-

year truce, which the French king readily granted. Both the Pope in Rome and the Parliament of Paris desired him to rise against the Albigensian heretics, whom preachers and papal legates had tried in vain to convert. All peaceful arguments having failed, the Cistercians preached a crusade, and Simon de Montfort led an army against the rebels in 1209. The war was still on when Louis VIII became king.

Blanche's husband buckled on his armor and rode forth to fight for the honor of Christendom. One only victory he won, at Avignon. As soon as the good news got into Paris, his wife began to make gay preparations for the return of the hero.

Then the mournful message. The hero was indeed homeward bound — in his casket. On the way home, the king had been stricken down with dysentery in a castle where he had stopped to recoup his strength. Hurriedly he made his testament and received the prelates' and barons' oath of loyalty to his eldest son. All down to the last man vowed to stand by the youngster. His father could go with the assurance that all would be well with the kingdom.

THE MAKING OF A KNIGHT

Eleven was so young to be raised up on a throne. Only in another ten years would Louis be of age to assume the full administration of the kingdom. In keeping with the deceased king's request, the widow Blanche was appointed regent until the king-elect should have reached his twenty-first birthday.

Not all the lords of the land nodded their bearded heads in approval. A few who cringed under the strong hand of Philip Augustus and his son were already hatching a plot that could mean a peck of trouble for the mother-regent. Three mutineers among them — Peter of Brittany, Raymond of Toulouse, and Hugh de la Marche — sided by the late king's brother Philip, who was already stretching out a gauntleted hand to claim the regency for himself.

Blanche knew she must act fast. Louis was positively and unmistakably the rightful heir to the throne. The best move to preserve it for him, and him for it, would be to have the boy king knighted and crowned before the rebel barons could gain the upper hand.

True enough, Louis was only twelve. But if he could be crowned, he could surely be knighted, even if knight-

hood was not conferred as a rule until a boy came to man's estate.

To be dubbed a knight was something big. It involved the dedication of one's young life to a high ideal. John of Salisbury had this to say about the terms of the knightly ideal back in 1165: "To protect the Church, to fight against treachery, to reverence the priesthood, to fend off injustice from the poor, to make peace in your own province, to shed your blood for your brethren, and, if need be, to lay down your life."

The ceremony of knighting generally began with an all-night watch of the aspirant before the altar on which his arms were deposited. For this prayerful tryst he wore a white robe symbolical of purity and a red mantle, red like the blood he must be ready to shed rather than break the promises of his knighthood. In the morning the candidate confessed his sins and took ceremonial purification in a bath, following which he heard Mass and received the Body and Blood of Christ. Forthwith he was knighted in the name of God, of Holy Mary, of St. Michael and St. George. The golden spurs and sword were conferred with much pomp and splendor, and the ceremony ended with a sermon.

To the ancient city of Soissons Louis accordingly went for the ritual of knighthood. He knew what it meant, the responsibilities it entailed, the vows he must take. He finished his night-long stretch in the dim-lit sanctuary and was created a knight by his uncle Philip. Tall and mature beyond his years, Louis with the thrill of knighthood fresh

within him impressed all who attended the ceremony. They could be sure that this beardless boy would follow in the footsteps of his exemplary forefathers.

For the twelve-year-old, knighthood was only a prelude. The main event would be the young king's anointing and coronation. Aware that the nobles were brewing mischief behind closed doors, the regent Blanche decided to hasten the day of her son's crowning. If possible, he must be crowned before winter set in. Toward the end of November counts and nobles received the customary royal invitation to accompany the king-elect to Rheims for the solemn anointing and coronation.

HIS MAJESTY, AGED TWELVE

It was the first Sunday of Advent, 1226. In the early morning the Bishop of Soissons and his Chapter (the See of Rheims being vacant at the time) wended their processional way to the residence where the boy king had remained overnight. The Bishop knocked on the door with an ivory hammer.

From inside, one of the officers of the Crown asked the traditional question, "Whom do you seek?"

The Bishop answered, "Him whom God has chosen to reign over us."

Again the same official voice from within. "The king is asleep."

Far from asleep. A very much excited and wide-awake Louis lay on a couch with tapers and rich draperies all around. In that hour he symbolized his recently deceased father whose throne he had inherited.

A second, a third time the prelate knocked with the ivory hammer, asking that the chosen one of God should come forth. At the third summons the boy bounded off the couch and donned his royal robes. The blue mantle

lined with ermine fitted him to perfection. The black velvet hat with the bright diamonds and the tall white plume were just as he had imagined them, only more wonderful and more dazzling.

The royal cortege made its way to the cathedral, the boy monarch astride his favorite blood horse. Church bells pealed out their pent-up gladness, and the people cheered him whom God had appointed to reign over them. Did not all authority come directly from the Author of Life? Did not one obey God when one obeyed a truly Christian ruler?

Inside the cathedral, the young heir walked the steps up to the altar, where he placed a shaky hand on the book of the Holy Gospel and took the solemn oath to uphold the divine honor, to defend the Church, and so serve the best interests of his motherland.

The Bishop then made the usual unctions, nine in all, with the holy oil, after which he crowned and sceptered the young sovereign. From the latter's lips arose to the King of kings a prayer for divine guidance, strength, and courage. Louis IX dedicated himself body and soul to God and France. From that day on he would belong to God and country, not to himself. In a very real sense his coronation had made him the servant of the servants of the Most High. A glorious *Te Deum* fittingly closed the ceremony.

A ceremony, be it stressed, that some overambitious barons refused to attend. Queen Mother Blanche knew that her young king might come to harm unless someone

preened the barons' plumes the right way. That could mean the way of wealth. With this idea in mind she opened the treasury and lavished liberal gifts upon the discontented barons. She did obtain a temporary calm that enabled her to complete the education and royal training of the young king.

Those were carefree days for Louis, divided between study and prayer with plenty of time marked off for fun and relaxation. He brushed up on his French and delved deeper into the complexities of Latin. He even began to recite the Divine Office and thoroughly relished its Latin verses.

THE PLOT TO KIDNAP

Sometime in 1228 the Queen Mother and her royal son went to Orleans. During the absence of the pair, the Count of Boulogne rounded up the Count of Brittany and Hugh de la Marche, and the three of them hatched a grim plot to kidnap the king and hold him as a hostage until his mother should agree to resign the regency in favor of her in-law Philip.

On the day appointed for the return of mother and son, the three knaves let it be known that they were leaving on a hunting trip. Naturally, they had bribed or scared a good half-dozen others into helping them with the kidnaping of the young monarch.

Fortunately for Blanche and Louis, one of the accomplices felt the pinpricks of conscience and squealed. He was the Count of Champagne, an admirer of the Queen Mother for all he had a finger in the evil scheme. His warning message reached Blanche and Louis as they were entering into the valley where the would-be kidnapers were in hiding. The king and his mother made haste to the Castle of Montlhery, from which Blanche rushed messengers to Paris for help. In no time the road from Paris to

Montlhery was lined on both sides with men, women, and children of all ages and social standing, so that the royal pair reached Paris without any untoward incident.

That same night, when all was quiet in the palace, Blanche embraced the boy king and told him to remember always the God who had delivered him from evil hands and the loyal subjects who had risked their very lives for him.

By telling on the others, the Count of Champagne had gotten himself into a peck of trouble. They threw the taunt of "traitor" at him and under Hugh de la Marche invaded the states of Champagne with plenty of help from British troops. The Count knew all was lost for him unless he appealed to the Crown. Louis IX wasn't the grandson of Philip Augustus in name only. The blood of the old warrior was tingling in his veins and the spirit of the grandfather lived on in the royal offspring. Louis promised to help his rescuer.

Off he went in the early days of 1229, tall and strong, not quite fifteen. Into Champagne he rode with his men and quieted the rebellious barons. Then he headed for the states of the Count of Brittany, and six days of combat made him master there. The Count feigned submission and was pardoned.

The royal teen-ager had hit and hit hard. He had won his first victory. One inch of splendor.

HE MAKES A CONVERT

A greater victory lay in store for Louis, a victory worth the lifeblood of a God — the conquest of a soul that had fallen into heresy.

Count Raymond VII of Toulouse was an open friend of the Albigenses. It dawned upon him that he should infuse new life into the heretics, who were pretty tame at that time. So he set the sparks flying and started his own one-man campaign in their favor.

Rome couldn't make light of that. From the City on the seven hills the Vicar of Christ sent a heartbroken plea to the French Crown. Louis delegated Hubert of Beaujeu to quell the Albigensian firebrand. Hubert had instructions from King Louis to treat Raymond like a brother, to overwhelm him with kindness rather than give him the cold shoulder. Louis knew that souls are not won with black looks and cutting words.

Conquered and repentant, Count Raymond made a clean breast at Meaux in the presence of an assembly of bishops, then proceeded to Paris to make public reparation before the papal envoy.

On Maundy Thursday Raymond was received in audience by King Louis, who forgave him his misdemeanors and invited him to sign a treaty. This the subdued Count did with a ready will. The Princess Jane, his only daughter, was affianced to Louis IX's brother Alphonsus, and thus both families were united in peace and concord. A teen-ager's kindly approach had done it.

One of the first acts of the young king was to get the monastery of Royaumont afoot with funds left by his father. During the summer holidays the royal youth slipped off to Royaumont, threw royal protocol to the wind, rolled up his sleeves, and pitched in with the masons and architects. There in the Cistercian solitude he lugged wood, stone, and mortar for the house of the Lord.

By offering his tiredness and aching muscles to God, Louis at the same time builded for eternity. He knew that a man can please God on his knees, surely; but a man sweating out in toil under a broiling sun is also most pleasing to the Almighty, a gracious spectacle to angels and to men.

SMILES AND A HAIRSHIRT

Louis observed his twentieth birthday April 25, 1234.

Tall and fair and handsome, like Saul of Biblical fame "from his shoulders and upward he appeared above all the people." (I Kings 9: 2) And there was not among the sons of France a goodlier knight than Louis in the full bloom of his prime. Joinville, a perennial admirer, used to call Louis "the handsomest man who ever breathed."

In the spiritual realm, Louis had his battles to fight, his passions to channel properly, his nature to curb. The Castilian and Capetian blood in his veins was not there for nothing. He had a temper and did not always keep it to himself, at least not in his teens and twenties. Once he was even prompted by God's good grace to take one drastic step: he resolved to keep his temper for exactly 365 days! That he should have needed a like resolution is proof evident that he hadn't come into the world with a ready-made halo. He had to go for it heart and soul and sinew.

Louis did not like wet blankets and took great care not to become one himself. His gay smile accompanied him day in and day out, and his deep, sonorous laugh spread the happy contagion of good humor wherever he went.

Come to think of it, what's wrong with smiles and laughter when you love God and go His way? Does not the Holy Book say that "a joyful mind maketh age flourishing: a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones"? (Prov. 17: 22)

No dry bones for this saint in the making. Louis gave all he had — with a smile. And in the giving, he molded himself into saintliness.

Like the perfect Christian gentleman he was, he gave roses to others and kept the thorns for himself. But he never let it show in his face. He took care not to let any pharisaical sadness show on his features when he fasted fifty-two Fridays a year and through Lent and Advent from start to finish. On Fridays he got his confessor to give him the discipline and let the chaplain know he wanted no soft stuff. Under his royal raiment Louis wore a hair-shirt. (To the uninitiated, that's a shirt of horsehair, tickling, prickling, and stinging. They're likely not manufactured any more. A good substitute would be patience and a smile and turning the other cheek when someone gets on your nerves, or, as they say, in your hair.)

Three times a day Louis ate what was put before him without making faces. On special days when the dishes were "too good" for him, he distributed them to the poor and kept the leftovers for himself.

He was also a man of prayer. Often enough he crept out of bed at midnight to pray in the royal chapel. Every morning saw him attending two Masses — the Mass for the day and a Requiem mass for the dead. He never omit-

ted the recitation of the breviary. Sometimes he had to say it on horseback with his chaplain. Evenings after Compline he knelt fifty times and said a Hail Mary at each genuflection.

His heart was filled with compassion for the needy poor in whom he with virile faith revered the suffering members of the Mystical Body. The royal kitchen was always open to the hungry. The king liked nothing better than to serve them at table, sliced bread and meat for them, filled their glasses with water, and waited hand and foot upon a good hundred of them each day. Poor monks and nuns, needy patients and new mothers, penniless guilds and hospitals were likewise the object of good King Louis's care. He was everybody's father, though still a young bachelor king.

WEDDING BELLS IN APRIL

The time had come for the French ruler, with all the marks of manly maturity fulfilled in him, to take a wife and helpmate.

Margaret, daughter of Raymond Beranger, Count of Provence, was the girl who made his heart beat faster. The amazingly beautiful and amazingly young woman of his mother's choice was every inch a princess. If we are to believe one lovestruck troubadour whose name has been lost down the centuries, "a nobler, kinder, or more gracious lady never walked this earth."

Bishop Anselm of St. Medard married them in the cathedral of Sens two days after the king's twentieth birthday. On the following day Margaret was crowned Queen of France. Three more days of gala rejoicing, and the royal couple returned to Paris. It was in the spring-time of the year and both were in the springtime of life, ready to walk hand in hand down the valleys of the years.

Paris welcomed them right royally. Congratulations and gifts poured in from all sides and a dazzling assortment of France's top celebrities attended the arrival of the newlyweds. No political calculations behind this marriage.

It was truly a love match such as seldom exists in pre-arranged unions where the elders leave the young no personal option.

But all was not smooth sailing. When Louis wedded Margaret, he had not automatically cast off Blanche. No real son would thus by-pass his real responsibilities. But these two women who thenceforth shared his life were both authoritative, and neither intended to cede to the other. Margaret matched every ounce of Blanche's imperiousness with one ounce of her own. It was up to Louis to keep the household in harmony through tact and tolerance.

Off and on during the day the Queen Mother went to her son's apartments to confer with him on matters of state. Should she find the apartments empty, she rightly conjectured that Louis was upstairs with his wife — losing time, as she saw it. And Blanche couldn't stand that.

So Louis thought it all out and came up with a super solution to avert a family crisis. He built a secret staircase leading to his wife's apartments. From then on, whenever Blanche put in an appearance, the guards knocked at Margaret's door and out rushed the young king, taking the stairs three at a time. A pretty innocent idea, that staircase, but it worked. It eliminated a lot of friction on the home front and contributed its big quota to domestic peace and happiness.

For all her somewhat dictatorial ways, Blanche had

certainly done a good job in bringing up her royal heir. Louis as king remained what he had been under the regency of his mother: humble, God-loving, faithful to his prayers and penances. Getting a crown on his head had not turned it.

The truly Christian home of Louis and Margaret soon echoed with the patter of little feet and the laughter of young hearts. They had eleven children, five sons and six daughters.

This royal line continued in power for the next five hundred years. It ended when the guillotine fell on Louis XVI. At that moment, history relates that the king's confessor, Irish-born Abbe Henry Edgeworth, murmured, "Son of St. Louis, ascend to heaven!"

A MERRY MODEL, FRANCIS

In the midst of wealth and worldly pomp, Louis fashioned his soul in the image and likeness of the Founder of the Friars Minor. It had not been his good fortune to know Francis of Assisi in person, for the latter had died when Louis was twelve, a brief two months before the boy king's coronation at Rheims. But Brother Pacifico and Brother Agnello had been missioned to France, and many other Franciscans had come after them.

Louis well knew that he could not abdicate the throne, so his Franciscan dreams of boyhood he dreamt no more. Instead, since he could not become a Franciscan in effect, he would be one in spirit. Many a trait in the life of the Assisian friar is matched by a similar trait in the life of the French king.

For instance, both were reverently in love with nature; both thrilled to hear the songs of troubadours and the deeds of brave knights; both served God with gladness of heart; both ministered to the needy and even the leprous; both were builders, lovers of poverty and mortification; and both visited the Holy Places of Palestine. Francis became a saint in the religious life, and Louis became one

in the married state. It was God's Will for them, and because they did it with love, they reached the summit of human glorification. They took their places among the saints of the Most High.

Franciscan tertiaries and all other Third Order members have in Louis not an up-in-the-clouds visionary but a very much down-to-earth patron saint. He is a model all can copy if they really get down to brass tacks about this thing called Christian perfection. He has done things which anyone, strong with the grace of God, can do. The heights to which Louis of France has climbed are not beyond our reach. They are there, gay in God's sunlight, waiting for people like you and me to scale them.

We might well take a cue from this kingly saint. Louis didn't lead two lives, one royal and the other Christian. He fused everything together. His Christian acts he performed in a royal manner, and his royal acts in a Christian manner. He didn't give up so much time and effort to God and so much to men, but lumped all together in a vast and beautiful communion of charity and grace. His prayers to God were for his kingdom, and his labors for the welfare of his great fief were consecrated to God.

Himself a lover of the simple things of life, he nevertheless did not refuse to be surrounded with luxury when the occasion called for it, either to preserve the prestige of the monarchy, or to impress the haughty barons and keep them in respectful submission. He still wore a hairshirt under his velvets and satins. He still accepted bodily chastisements every Friday that brought the remem-

brance of Christ's death on Calvary. God knew his heart was not in show and pageantry. Nothing else mattered.

It was a custom to celebrate with tourneys and festivities the admission of a new member into the ranks of knighthood. This Louis approved, though he knew where to draw the line between permissible rejoicing and diversions that could spell danger to morals. If anyone dared to overstep the mark, he could look forward to a royal reprimand and possible exclusion from the court.

Louis allowed neither obscenity nor profanity. He once issued an edict that any man guilty of blasphemy should be branded with a redhot iron. When not branded, the delinquent could count on a stiff fine or a flogging, or possibly a term behind bars.

What the king preached, that he practised. One Dominican who knew him well declared that Louis never spoke ill of anyone. Joinville is more explicit and puts it this way: "I was a good twenty-two years in the king's company and never once did I hear him swear, either by God, or His Mother, or His saints. I did not even hear him name the devil, except if he met the word when reading aloud, or when discussing what had been read."

Even as a bachelor king and still very young, Louis had risen up against all forms of usury, in accordance with Christian teachings. Usurers who had fattened their wallets and who were unable to contact their original borrowers were ordered to help finance a crusade which the Holy Father was trying to launch.

THE CRUSADER

Louis had his first serious illness toward the end of 1244.

He'd been married ten years with that one-in-a-million Margaret who understood him so well and loved him so deeply. And now illness. Dysentery. It had carried off his father in the prime of manhood.

But it must not carry off good King Louis. The whole kingdom got on its knees and prayed for his recovery. Yet it all seemed so hopeless. The doctors consulted and consulted again. One of them had already drawn a veil over the king's wasted features. Someone began the prayers for the dying.

Then it happened. The miracle. Louis sighed, drew a deep breath, and made the amazing statement: "From high heaven the light of the Orient has shone about me. By the grace of God I have been recalled from the dead. O my God, be Thou blessed and accept my promise to become a crusader." Blanche and Margaret heard, but dared not believe their ears. Still, their eyes could not deceive them. Louis smiled hugely and told them he was in the best of health. In the next breath he asked to see the Bishop of Paris.

When the prelate entered the sick room, the king declared his readiness to pledge himself to defend the Holy Land as a crusader of Christ.

The Bishop hesitated. Was this the effect of fever? Was the king delirious? Did he really mean every word he said? But the great churchman soon perceived that the man with the warm, pulsating heart was sane, serious, and sincere. With Louis looking on, the Bishop took a measure of red ribbon, scissored it in two, made a cross out of the pieces, and presented it to the king for his reverent kiss.

Louis was now a crusader at heart. His thoughts dwelt longer on the Holy Land, on the Sepulchre of the Savior, on the precious relics of the Passion. One of these he had the joy of securing for France before he sailed off for Palestine. It was the Crown of Thorns.

Some five years back, Emperor Baldwin II of Constantinople had sold it to the city of Venice. Now Louis bought it from the Venetians and went barefoot to meet it when it entered Paris. For the time being he placed it in the royal chapel. In less than three years, however, the new shrine of Sainte-Chapelle, one of the most beautiful examples of Gothic architecture in those days, was ready to receive the sacred relic. In the perilous days of the French Revolution it was removed to the Abbey of St. Denis, then to Notre Dame, where it has remained ever since.

Louis IX had reigned wisely and well; under him France had prospered and taken her place among the nations of the world. He felt that his presence could be dis-

pensed with for a time and that the Holy Places needed him. Germany and England were busy on their battlefields, while France was at peace. France had a vocation. She must cede her leader and her men to the city of the Son of God. She must deliver Jerusalem from the infidels.

Elaborate preparations were made for the journey. Louis was itching to get started, but certain circumstances and red-taped officialdom caused him to postpone his departure until 1248. He bided his time in soldierly patience, serving his Maker at home until he could sail the high seas for Him.

At long last, in the early morning of June 12, the crusader king was able to don his royal robes and proceed to the Abbey of St. Denis. There, with the Benedictine monks to witness his dedication, he was handed a blood-red banner and a pilgrim staff by the papal legate. Thence he barefooted his way to historic Notre Dame, where he heard Mass and received Communion with Margaret, his brothers, and a handful of courtiers. Outside the cathedral he said goodbye to his subjects, then leaped on his horse and disappeared in a cloud of dust. Margaret went with him. Queen Mother Blanche accompanied the pair as far as Lyons, where she bade a tearful farewell to a son she feared nevermore to see this side of eternity.

On August 25 the fleet sailed from Aigues-Mortes, at the mouth of the Rhone, while the clerics on board sang the Church's official hymn to the Holy Ghost, **Veni Creator**. Louis was aboard the **Mountjoy** with his wife, two

of his brothers, the papal legate, the ecclesiastics, and the attaches of the royal household.

Their immediate objective was Egypt, whose sultan had been overrunning Palestine. Damietta, at the mouth of one of the branches of the Nile, put up a good amount of resistance, but by nightfall of the day it was attacked it surrendered to the French. Louis and his suite made a solemn entry into the city to the strains of the **Te Deum**. The French monarch remembered he had enlisted in a holy war. Accordingly he issued orders that all acts of violence his soldiers might commit would be punished and restitution made to the persons injured. He made it clear that no infidel taken into captivity should meet death at French hands. Should this or that infidel wish to become a Christian, he was to be instructed and, if he so willed, baptized.

The French fortified Damietta, stored up provisions, and settled there for six months. The rising of the Nile and the summer heat prevented their march forward to further conquests. In the fall months they moved to attack the Saracens on the right bank of the river. The place was Mansourah and it was in the smart hands of Generalissimo Fakhreddin. The French lost a great number of men there, but at last, in February, 1250, they obtained the mastery. The king thanked heaven for the victory, while tears rolled down his drawn cheeks. One dearer than his own life he had lost. His brother was among the casualties.

Another agony. The decimated French army had to remain two months on the banks of the Nile, and during

that time the corpses of the fallen caused an epidemic of typhus in the French troops. Food was getting scarcer and scarcer. Plenty of it was coming over from France via the Nile, but the Saracens held up each boat and kept the eats for themselves. Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty ships were thus intercepted, while the French remnant at Mansourah hoped and waited, prayed and starved.

In those dark days Louis showed himself more than ever the king and father of his people. Himself stricken with typhus, he carried on as if nothing was the matter with him. When his courtiers objected that he should be kinder to himself, he merely replied that he would stand by his men in life and in death. The enemy could shackle and torture him, clap him behind prison bars, prick his naked chest with the cold steel of the sword, or threaten his precious life at the point of a gun, but he would not leave. Not unless every last son of France did.

PRISONER'S PRIDE

Napoleon once said that an army marches on its stomach.

So it does. The French detachment at Mansourah was half-starved, in no condition to fight. Something had to be done. Anything. Why not return to Damietta? The king disliked the idea, but prudence dictated that as the best move, so they left on April 5, 1250. Many of their best soldiers were still desperately ill with typhus; for some, it was a veritable death march.

One night, halfway between Mansourah and Damietta, the exhausted party halted at a little village. Louis, wasted with fever and fatigue, was carried off to a friendly house. Suddenly the Turkish vanguard appeared with drawn sword. The king instructed the barons to surrender Damietta to the Turks if that could mean peace. The treaty was already concluded, when on the scene appeared a sergeant, doubtless coached by Louis's enemies, who declared that the French ruler had given orders for an unconditional surrender to the Turks. Good news for these, but not for the French. The emir broke the new treaty on the spur of the moment and by this fact got 15,000 Frenchmen on his hands. Louis their leader was taken prisoner on his sick-bed, chained like a criminal, and led to Mansourah.

He preached the nicest sermon of his life there. Example, not words. He didn't curse his fate, didn't answer in kind when his jailers taunted him. Nothing high and lofty about him. The serene air with which he met insults awed his guards. There was a Christlikeness about him that impressed even the men who wished he'd drop dead. So did his prayerfulness astonish them. He'd managed to salvage an old Book of Psalms and now made it his hourly companion. Daily he recited the Divine Office with two chaplains and had the prayers of the Mass read to him. Marvelling at the fortitude of this man of God, his captors told him outright that they would long since have broken faith with their own Prophet had he treated them as the God of the Christians permitted Louis to be treated.

While the king was held captive at Mansourah, his wife at Damietta gave birth to a son, named John Tristan by reason of the tragedy that surrounded his arrival.

All was not well at Damietta. A civil war was in the offing, and black marketing enabled some to line their pockets with gold while others were starved down to skin and bones. The French garrison, dispirited and afraid of famine, was ready to call it quits. Margaret intervened. What would happen, she asked, if this stronghold lost its brave barons? And what fate would await her husband? And what of the other men in shackles? Still the barons were not convinced. It was only when Margaret, with funds from the royal treasury, purchased the total food supply in Damietta that they agreed to hold the fort.

Meanwhile back in Mansourah negotiations for the

liberation of Louis were under way. The sultan demanded Damietta and the French possessions in Syria, to which Louis strongly objected on the ground that he had no right to dispose of Christians lands after that manner. After much discussion the king and the sultan arrived at satisfactory conditions and on April 28 the two got ready to sign the treaty. That same morning the sultan's subordinates mutinied and shot him down in cold blood. One of the murderers slashed out the bloodied heart of the sultan and held it out to the king of France.

"What will you give me," bellowed the brute, "for having delivered you from your enemy?"

The king's lips showed one straight line. He kept a freezing silence.

TO PALESTINE AND BACK

The negotiations between the king and the deceased sultan prevailed. Damietta was handed over to the emir, the ransom money was paid, and the prisoners were set free.

Another ten days and Louis reached Acre, where his grandfather Philip Augustus had fought in the Third Crusade. There Queen Margaret and the baby prince were awaiting the valiant liege lord.

He remained four years in Palestine. During that time he fortified the cities of Acre, Jaffa, Caesarea, and Tyre, which as yet had remained in Christian hands. He likewise visited the Holy Places that were in the possession of Christians, encouraged their defenders and did what he could to strengthen their defences. His main idea, however, was to recover Jerusalem which had fallen into the power of the infidels. A worthy tourney-ground indeed for his soldier heart!

He was burying the dead in Sidon — two thousand had fallen — when he got news of his mother's death. It broke his spirit. From that day on, he felt an uncontrollable urge to return to Paris. He talked the matter over

with his councillors, who agreed that his presence could no longer benefit Jerusalem. The blunt-nosed prows pointed away from Acre on April 24, 1254. The crusade had been a fiasco. The Holy Places remained in hostile hands. Louis had not even reached Jerusalem, much less delivered it.

But the great king had in all things been the perfect knight of Jesus. If his Captain willed this defeat, Louis was ready to accept it. He had lit the torch of good example and selfless dedication. Please God, some groping heathen might sooner or later walk in its light.

HERO AT HOME

The warrior returned to France. He was in the prime of life, only forty. But the people who welcomed him into Paris saw how he had aged in six years. He was played out, frail, wrinkled. Like his Master, the disciple had scars.

The kingdom was at peace. Young Philip, aged twelve, had been trained for kingship by grandmother Blanche. Why not anoint him king and appoint a prudent regent for another nine years? Thoughts like those filled the head of Louis IX. Was it really necessary that he remain at the helm?

His old dreams again. He wanted so much to retire to some monastery, there to follow Christ at closer range.

One evening he broke down and told everything to Margaret. His fine passionate eyes glistened with tears as he pointed out how he had fulfilled his kingly duty down the years. Surely now he could come down from his throne? Or should he? The Master had not come down from His Cross. A throne, for a man who cared naught for it, was a pretty heavy cross. Might he not come down, Margaret?

His wife blinked back hot tears and spoke to him in her sweet, gentle voice. About their children. About France. About all Christendom. About herself, poor woman, who still had need of him at her side. I'd be lost without him, she thought.

The king understood. He must stay on his cross. He never asked to come down again.

Instead, he intensified his efforts for the preservation of peace in the kingdom, in the Christian world. Frank and affable, though modest and reserved, he showed himself as careful in material as in spiritual matters. Popes, prelates, diplomats had recourse to his kindly counselling. Another Solomon walked among men, listened to their grievances, tempered justice with charity, sent each aggrieved one away with a smile on his lips. Louis lived to the hilt the motto inscribed inside his signet ring: "God, France, Margaret."

The "king's court" of his ancestors he changed into a popular court. Sometimes he held it in his palace, but oftener on the steps of the Sainte-Chapelle or under a spreading oak in the forest of Vincennes. He sent out monks the length and breadth of the kingdom to find out the trials and tribulations of his subjects, their worries and hardships. At times he even went in person to make these kind investigations.

He also protected vassals and tenants from cruel war lords. On one occasion when a Flemish count hanged three boys for hunting rabbits on his territory, Louis

spared him from the noose, but ordered him to finance the erection of three chapels, hand over to monks the forest in which the triple crime had been committed, serve three years in Palestine, and pay an additional fee of 12,000 pounds.

Louis helped to endow the famous college of theology which was later known as the Sorbonne and obtained for it the approval of Pope Clement IV. Its head, Robert de Sorbon, a learned canon and doctor, was the king's friend and occasionally his confessor. Later, the king founded in Paris a hospital with three hundred beds. No one in need ever had recourse to him in vain. He extended a helping hand to everyone. His heart he had patterned on the kind Heart of Christ; his hands, like his God's, opened to bless and do good.

Nor did he neglect those of his own household, Margaret and the children. He was a model parent and educator. As king, he had felt it his duty to marry and continue the royal line, though it meant trampling upon his fondest dream, that of becoming a monk. But once engaged in the state of matrimony, he accepted his obligations and nobly shouldered his responsibilities. His eleven children were his "first subjects." Every day, no matter what the press of other business, he spent two hours with them, playing, praying, instructing. His boys he wanted to be perfect gentlemen, his girls perfect ladies.

He was even hoping that little John and Blanche, born during the crusade, would consecrate themselves to

God in the monastic life. While they did not enter into religion, their father's wish certainly indicates his greatness of soul. He never lost his sincere affection for monks and often sought the company of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, a distant relative. Jokingly he used to say that should he ever become a monk, he would need two bodies — one to enter with the Dominicans, the other with the Franciscans.

SOME DREAMS DON'T DIE

When Louis IX returned from the Holy Land, he did not discard his crusader's cross. He continued to wear it on his shoulder to show he had every intention of going back. Once a crusader, always a crusader. The lure of the Holy Places was in his blood and not to be denied. His brain was forever teeming with dreams and plans. Most dreams die, but those of a crusader are strong and hard as the rock of the Sepulchre.

It so happened that the king served as godfather at the baptism of a converted Jew in the Abbey of St. Denis. On this occasion he remarked to an ambassador from the emir of Tunis that he would gladly spend a lifetime in Saracen prisons if that could win the emir over to the Christian way of life.

Such was Louis's love for souls that, to lift them from their misery and Christlessness, he was ready for any sacrifice. Prodigally he would fling on the wind the shining coins of prayer and self-denial and painstaking effort. And if God wanted it, he would pay even with the red coin of his own blood. Anything, everything was a paltry price to pay if thereby he might rescue immortal souls from the

dark depths of the night that knows no morning and lead them into the fullness of the Light of the World.

It was therefore with understandable joy that Louis heard, some time later, that the emir had had a change of heart and was ready to join the Christian religion and even the crusade. The king hurriedly mustered up an army, the Pope supporting him and granting him one-tenth of all Church revenues to help meet the expenses. A crusade could cost a pretty penny.

The French were not so eager to let their leader go. Louis was fifty-six and worn out before his time with toil, illness, and austerities. Two trusted statesmen were appointed regents. Louis and his three eldest sons, Philip, John, and Peter, sailed with their forces from Aigues-Mortes on July 1, 1270. On landing at Carthage the French learned to their utter dismay that they had been misinformed about the emir's intentions. The man no more intended to pass over to Christianity than he intended to go jump in the Mediterranean.

The downhearted king decided to wait at Carthage for reenforcements from his brother, the king of Sicily. They came, but too late.

TO A HOLIER LAND

The royal crusader never reached the Holy Land.

A holier country where Christ is King and Mary Queen beckoned to him. On the broad plains of old Carthage Louis Capet fought his greatest battle, conquering not a Moslem band, but himself, so that in the midst of life he might face death with a smile on his lips and resignation in his heart.

Yes, he must give up all his hopes, all his aspirations of victory, of adventuring for his Lord, of making Christians at home in the land of Christ. Loyal, daring, fearless he had been. The Supreme Commander was well pleased with him. Not victory nor success mattered; only love and obedience to the Divine Will.

The first inkling of counter-orders from the Great Headquarters came in the form of illness. Dysentery and other diseases broke out among the crusaders. The king and his sons John and Philip were stricken. John lasted only a few more days, until August 3, when his lifeless body was coffined for removal to France. The lad had just turned twenty. It was soon apparent that Louis would not recover. One of his chaplains said Mass daily at his bedside and anointed him for the journey to heaven.

The Sieur de Joinville has handed down to us the king's last instructions to his son Philip. They are nothing short of a blueprint for holiness, as a few excerpts will show.¹⁾

"Fair son, the first thing I would teach thee is to set thine heart to love God; for unless he love God none can be saved. Keep thyself from doing aught that is displeasing to God, that is to say, from mortal sin. Contrariwise thou shouldst suffer every manner of torment rather than commit a mortal sin.

"If God send thee adversity, receive it in patience and give thanks to our Savior and bethink thee that thou hast deserved it, and that He will make it turn to thine advantage. If He send thee prosperity, then thank Him humbly, so that thou becomeest not worse from pride or any other cause, when thou oughtest to be better. For we should not fight against God with His own gifts.

"Confess thyself often and choose for thy confessor a right worthy man who knows how to teach thee what to do, and what not to do; and bear thyself in such sort that thy confessor and thy friends shall dare to reprove thee for thy misdoings. Listen to the services of Holy Church devoutly, and without chattering; and pray to God with thy heart and with thy lips, and especially at Mass when the consecration takes place. Let thy heart be tender and

1) The author is indebted to E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., for permission to quote these excerpts from John de Joinville's *Chronicle of the Crusade of St. Louis*, contained in *Memoirs of the Crusades*, Everyman Edition.

full of pity toward those who are poor, miserable, and afflicted, and comfort and help them to the utmost of thy power."

There were further instructions on the companions Philip should choose, the justice and charity with which he should rule the realm, his conduct in war and in peace. Then the dying king requested prayers and a special share in all of Philip's good works. And would he, like a dutiful son, have requiems chanted for his father.

Then he ended with these words:

"Fair, dear son, I give thee all the blessings that a good father can give to his son. And may the Blessed Trinity and all the saints keep and defend thee from all evils; and God give thee grace to do His will always, so that He be honored in thee, and that thou and I may both, after this mortal life is ended, be with Him together and praise Him everlastingly. Amen."

The dying saint was speechless and extremely weak when the sun of August 25 rose over the city of Carthage. At three in the afternoon he stretched out his arms in the form of a cross and tried to speak. The doctor at his side made out a few words. "We — shall go — into Jerusalem."

Then the king joined his hands as if to pray. His dry lips framed the words of the dying Son of God: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." His head sank back. His eyes closed. The kingly knight had passed to his eternal reward.

The death bell was still tolling when the king of Sicily

arrived with the promised reenforcements. Tears ran down his cheeks as he gave instructions for the embalming of his brother the king, whose remains were sealed in a precious casket pending their return to the mother country.

With due solemnity the young king of France, Philip III, enshrined his father's mortal remains in the abbey-church of St. Denis, near those of Philip Augustus and Louis VIII, noble forbears of a saint. Unfortunately, the motherland is no longer able to venerate the relics of her stalwart son. Sacrilegious hands tore open the tomb of St. Louis during the perilous days of the French Revolution and scattered his ashes to the four winds.

THE LAST WORD

God is wonderful in His saints. A brief twenty-five years after the death of Louis IX, the process of his canonization was begun and completed in record time. The king who died on August 25, 1270, was declared a saint of Holy Church in 1297. His feast is observed on August 25 throughout the Christian world. The Collect for his Mass reads: "O God, who hast translated Thy blessed Confessor Louis from an earthly to the heavenly kingdom: we beseech Thee, through his merits and intercession, that we may become the companions of the King of kings, Jesus Christ Thy Son . . ."

The life of St. Louis, here so briefly told, gives us many a clue as to how we may enjoy this blessed companionship of the King of kings. There must be a preparation. Heaven is not a good fortune bestowed by a rich uncle whose existence we knew nothing about. It is a kingdom to be acquired by prayer, the pruning knife of penance, dedication to God and the children of God. A kingdom won through charity, patience, and joyful acceptance of the Divine Will.

Saints don't just happen. Nor are they born full-

fledged and haloed. They are made. It is our heroism or our cowardice that determines whether we shall be saints or sissies. For saints, God bless them everyone, are the real heroes. Spiritually they do tower head and shoulders above the rank and file, who are scared to scale the heights — scared of the steep climb and the cross they may find on top.

Fortunately for us, the era of these supermen of the spirit is not past. The world is still bearing and will bear more saints. God, looking down upon it, can still call it good. It is good because it is a stage on which we can star in a drama that will rejoice the City of God.

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