

Recalls Student Days of Rene Menard, Later Jesuit Missionary To Indians

By ALEXANDER M. STEWART
'Rene Menard was born in Paris, September 7, 1605. Chivalry had been waning for a century but officers in the army, and some companies of swordsmen, still wore armor made by the old armor makers, The St. Legers. Match-lock guns were in use, which soon were to be superseded by the wonderful new invention of wheel lock muskets, which in turn were to give place toward the close of the century, to flint locks. It is certain that no one seeing the new baby, on that day in September, would believe that he would take part in the life of Indian villages in far-away America, which centuries later were to be identified as to their time and age by the type of gun locks which were picked up on these Indian sites. The King of France was Henry IV. Very earnest and zealous religion had the highest place in universities and even in the courts of kings.

In those days the Latin Quarter of Paris, instead of being the abode of artists' frivolity, was the place of a four-hundred year old university, where Latin was the common language for students from many nations. Doubtless a prayerful mother and the great Notre Dame Cathedral and other churches, where were treasured the chivalry, the heroic adventures and the saintliness of

France, had their influence on the character of Rene Menard as his inquiring mind opened up through childhood to the influences of his surroundings. But before going further, let us picture the Seine River as it flowed through Paris. Floating on the river were barges from other connecting streams, bringing the produce of France to the capital city. No one could live in Paris without seeing these barges propelled past the shallow places by men with long poles and by other men, walking on the bank, pulling with long ropes. Doubtless, as this boy Rene began to show superiority in his school studies, his parents felt proud that he would belong to the scholarly class which was aloof from manual labor, such as could be seen in the lives of these river men. But strange things happened in life and the scholarly course, which led him through the university, brought him to be one of those many 17th century Frenchmen who, in order to reach supreme objectives, helped pull boats up most of the navigable rapids in Eastern America. There is little doubt that the rifles in the Seneca River saw him helping Indians and boats up stream more than one hundred and fifty years before the Erie Canal was planned, and more than two hundred years before the Barge Canal had made it deep water.

Enters Novitiate
On the very day of his 19th birthday, September 7, 1624, when according to French law he was of age and was free to make his own decisions, he became a novice in the Society of Jesus. Only young men of great promise in mind and spirit could enter this Order; not all of them succeeded in completing its thorough and difficult course. After two years novitiate in Paris, during which time he was free to withdraw from the Order if he wished, he was sent in October, 1626, to the college conducted by the Jesuits, which Henry IV. had founded in La Fleche. Recently the buildings of this college have been used as a military training school. At La Fleche he spent three

years studying arts and sciences. At the completion of which course he would be equal to the American college graduate who has taken the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In October, 1629, he was sent to teach Latin at the Jesuit College of Orleans, the birthplace of Joan of Arc, who was born so many years before that her story was known only as history and tradition. In October, 1632, he was sent to the old university at Bourges, where he spent four years studying theology. Insight into his mental quality is given by the fact that he not only distinguished himself in theology and philosophy but that he stood high in literature.

Let us pause here, at Bourges, to make a surmise about a lost coin. Bourges was a Roman military camp from the year 52 B. C., when Julius Caesar took it from the Gauls under Vercingetorix. "Omnes Gallia Divisa est," etc. Roman ramparts built in the 4th century today form the walls of houses in the old part of the town. A Roman trench passes close to the very great St. Stephen's Church, the magnificent forerunner of the little St. Stephen's Mission at Mud Lock on the Seneca River. So much is fact; now for a guess—and let all historians remember that this is only a guess—some Roman soldier lost a bronze coin, part of a month's pay, in the old Roman camp at Bourges; 1400 years later Rene Menard, then a student and teacher of Latin, on an afternoon walk, found the coin and treasured it as a pocket piece. Now for a fact, in the summer of 1931 a bronze coin, bearing the profile of the Roman Emperor, Antoninus Pius of a date about 165 A. D., was dug from an Indian grave near the site of one of Father Rene Menard's missions namely that at Great Gully Brook, Cayuga County, New York. This coin is now in the Municipal Museum, Edgerton Park, Rochester, N. Y. This surmise about the coin would apply equally well to Father

Receive Commencement Honors



In the upper photo appears Mr. Alfred E. Smith, wife of the former Governor of New York, as she received the 1933 Viri Veritatis medal at the commencement exercises of the College of Our Lady of the Elm, Chicago, Mo. The Most Rev. Thomas M. O'Leary, Bishop of Springfield and president of the college, is shown presenting the medal, which is awarded by the college annually to a lay woman chosen for her faithfulness and devotion to the Church. (Woodhead photo.) Lower photo was taken at the 75th annual commencement held recently at St. Benedict's College, Atchison, Kas., following the conferring of the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws upon Mr. John S. Young of New York City, staff announcer of the National Broadcasting Co. in recognition of his Catholic Action through the medium of the radio. Photo shows, front row, left to right: Mr. Young; Most Rev. J. Henry Thion, of Wichita, Kas., retired, Titular Bishop of Rosama; Rt. Rev. Martin Veth, G. S. B., president of the college; back row, left to right, Rev. Richard Burns, O. S. B., dean of residence, and Dr. Thomas E. Purcell, K. S. G., of Kansas City, Mo., president of the National Council of Catholic Men, sponsors of the National Catholic Radio Hour.

Stephen De Carhell, also of Bourges, France and of the Cayuga mission at Greatfalls.

After Bourges there came for Rene Menard a year in Moulins, teaching rhetoric and two years teaching literature. A very gracious letter to the writer of this article has come from the Reverend A. Monier Vinard, S. J., which tells that the college has now been rebuilt in the suburbs of Moulins at Yzeure-Ailler. Following Moulins, came a year of prayer and retreat in the house of his Order at Rouen. Rene Menard in fact represents the thoroughness of training of mind and spirit, rarely equalled in our usual courses of education. No man of education need feel humiliated in recognizing the training of Fr. Rene Menard.

Tower of Butter
His residence at Rouen carries us back, in thought, to several centuries before his time, when Englishmen caused Joan of Arc to be burned to death. In a few years after his course was completed Fr. Rene Menard was to see Indian captives tortured to death in much the same way. One of the familiar sights of Rouen in the days of Rene Menard, as well as now, is the tall spire of the cathedral which spire was called "Tour de Baurre," or Tower of Butter. Back in the 15th century plagues were induced to pay towards the buildings of this spire by being allowed to eat butter during Lent, doubtlessly to the great delight of the farmers, who, during Lent, continued to sell butter in the market place in front of the beautiful church.

Tower of Butter! In student days it pointed to Heaven and directed toward prayer and devotion; but in later years, when the missionary explorer was stormbound in a camp with the hissing waves of a great lake cannonading against a bleak rocky point and with the last ration of boiled mutton and porridge, eaten, the Tower of Butter becomes a picture of plenty, bringing his imagination as he craves of food.

Comes to America
Nearly a score of years later Fr. Etienne De Carhell was teacher and the young La Salle was student in this college at Rouen. Stories of New France and reports of early mission life among the Indians were being circulated in the schools of France in the time of Rene Menard. The names Otawak, Nepisicun, Iroquois and Huron and Kebec were coming into the conversation of French and Latin discourse at the dinner tables of the colleges. In March, 1640, Fr. Rene Menard set out in the ship Esperance from Dloppe for Canada and Quebec. (Relation of 1640, Thwaites XVIII p. 67). On the ship were also four nuns, who expected to serve in the Ursuline convent and in hospital in Quebec, and Father Duperon and two lay brothers. Fr. Menard writes "Accordingly there were four nuns who embarked in the vessel Esperance." Mr. Couper was master. From the 26th of March to the 28th of April, it seemed as if the demons were trying to stop the passage of these good men and women to

Canada. For a month they did not set away from the sight of the coast of France. Nearby, another ship had anchored, the Valance, which went to pieces with the loss of twenty men.

and new excitements were encountered. Several hostile English frigates appeared, threatening to capture them. News of the hostile ships reached the Premier of France, Cardinal Richelieu, and at his suggestion the King sent 10 vessels of the French Navy, which conducted the religious emigrants out of the English Channel from there onward to a quiet voyage took them past Newfoundland to Tadoussac where the Saguenay River comes out of its gulf canyon and where white porpoises play in the blue waters of the immensely wide river. While the Esperance and the two other vessels which had come with them were delayed at Tadoussac ("demeures Tadoussac"), waiting for a wind and tide to carry them onward, up the long wide part of the river, Fr. Rene Menard and Brother Dominique Scot embarked in a long boat to carry the news to Quebec of the fleet's arrival. What a relief, what a vacation for those two eager young men to be out of school and out of the smelly ship and to be in an open boat on the majestic St. Lawrence in the month of June, where unspoiled forests filled the breezes with a worshipful incense. Even by this time Quebec had known famine, the capture by an English fleet under Admiral Kirk, and the constant fear of Iroquois attack, so that when the ships arrived at this pioneer town, where log cabins showed traces of quaint old France and when the people of that town knew that relief and food and letters and reinforcements were coming, the whole town crowded into the church and sang the Te Deum on the 8th of July, 1640, when the fleet arrived at Quebec.

REFERENCES
A. Melancon, S. J.—"Liste Des Missionnaires-Jesuites" "Nouvelle-France et Louisiane: 1611-1800" Henry Colin Campbell—"Pere Rene Menard" Loaned by the Wisconsin Historical Society. R. G. Thwaites, Editor—"Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents" 73 volumes. See Index, under Menard, Mesnard and Menari. Several sets are available in Rochester, N. Y., in libraries including the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, St. Bernard's Seminary and Reynolds Library. Hobart College, Canadawaga Hist. Soc., Cornell University.

Father Wurzer Given Master of Arts Degree
Faculty members of Aquinas Institute who now hold Masters of Arts degrees include: the Rev. Joseph E. Wurzer, vice-principal, Edwin J. Dolan and Edward Lintz. Father Wurzer and Mr. Dolan received their degrees from Canisius College and Mr. Lintz from the University of Rochester, at recent commencement exercises.

BERNADETTE'S OWN LETTER IS REPRODUCED

(Continued from Page 1)
"Then the vision made the Sign of the Cross, then my hand trembled I tried to make it and I could not."

"I said my rosary, the vision seemed to flinger her hands, but she did not move her lips. When I had finished my rosary, the vision disappeared suddenly."

"I asked the two other children if they had seen anything. They said no, then I told them that I had seen a lady clothed in white, but that I did not know who it was and that they must say nothing about it. Then they said that I ought not to return there. I told them no."

"I returned on Sunday for a second time because I felt myself driven from within; my mother had forbidden me to go there; after High Mass the two other children and I again asked my mother, she did not wish it, she said that she was afraid I would fall in the water. I feared that I would not return in time for Vespers, I promised I would; then she gave me permission to go."

Brings Holy Water
"I had gotten from the parish church a little bottle of Holy Water to throw at the vision when I reached the Grotto, I saw her, indeed, I saw her; as I threw it at her, she smiled and bowed her head. When I had finished my rosary she asked if I would wish to go there during fifteen days, I replied yes."

"She said I must tell the priests to build a chapel there."

"Then she told me that I must drink from the spring; not seeing one, I went to the Grotto to drink, she told me it was not there, she pointed with her finger showing me the spring, I was there, I saw only a little dirty water, I reached out my hand, I could not get it, I began to scrape, then I could get it; three times I tried, the fourth time I was able to drink, then the vision disappeared and I withdrew."

During many days I asked who she was, she would only smile holding her arms pendant, she raised her eyes towards heaven, then she told me that she was the Immaculate Conception.

Gave Three Secrets
In the space of these fifteen days, she gave me three secrets which she forbade me to tell to anyone, I have been faithful up to now.

"This, Monsieur, is the recital concerning the vision, may it please you I thank you for the portrait which you have sent me, I shall send it carefully."

"My dear mother also wishes to be remembered to you and asks you to accept her respectful sentiments. We recommend ourselves, Monsieur, to your fervent and holy prayers, uniting ourselves with you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary."

"Your humble and always devoted, Bernadette Soubirous"

Father Meehan Returns To Ithaca For Convention
Ithaca.—The Rev. John E. Meehan of San Francisco, Calif., delivered the sermon on "The Feast of Corpus Christi," at the 9:30 o'clock Mass Sunday, June 18, at the Immaculate Conception Church.

Father Meehan, who is a former member of the Immaculate Conception choir, was in Ithaca to attend the annual convention of the Telluride Association. He attended Cornell University from 1919 to 1921.

Before attacking a man the devil looks for his weakest or least guarded part; against this he plants his batteries and directs his assault.

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