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## Rev. Dr. Owen B. McGuire Saints, Sanctity and Science

I had intended this week to write an article to show that an old priest-friend of mine, lately deceased, was truly a saint, when I picked up a Life of St. Teresa of Lisieux that I had read thirteen years ago. I opened the book just to look up a passage that for its anti-Christian tone and ignorance had pained me at that time. But I kept on reading; and I think what I found will interest readers of the CATHOLIC COURIER.

The author of the book is a French poet and novelist, Madame Delarue-Mardrus. It was translated into English and published in this country. Some passages in the original French were omitted or toned down in the translation. This book is a thoroughly bad one. Despite the fact that at the time of its publication a laudatory review of it—unqualified in its laudation—was sent out to the Catholic press, it is a thoroughly bad one. Either the reviewer had not read the book—which, I am told, is the case with many reviewers—or he was strangely blind to the poison found on its almost every page. But this fact has its lesson for Catholics. It would seem that some of us are willing to overlook the "poisoned honey" when dressed up as a "work of art."

Only last week I read two letters given to the public by two Catholic writers in praise of James Joyce's "Ulysses"—the most blasphemous and pornographic book I have ever read. I did read it God forgive me!—because when it was published here and lauded as a "work of art" by the secular press, many Catholics were puzzled and were asking questions about it.

**AN APOSTATE**  
The author of this other book is a French novelist and poet and an apostate from the Catholic Church. Not "a Protestant lady," as the headlines of the review informed the Catholic public. Her many books, novels and poetry, make her apostasy quite plain, her atheism, "futurism," and contempt for all moral codes. To do her justice, she is quite frank about it also in this life of the Saint. She is, she declares, "one without faith," "a Catholic without religion," "indifferent to religion," "an unbeliever" and, "there is no future life."  
Her book, however, is interesting and in a sense valuable and useful. It is, namely, an epitome of the "arguments" by which pseudo-science attempts to show that the manifestations of exceptional sanctity, such as miracles, prophecy, etc., are all due to hallucination, hysteria, neurosis, auto-suggestion "by which one sees what he wants to see." This, in fact, might be said to be the thesis and purpose of the whole book. The author, however, is "liberal"; and in her generosity admits that "science" has not yet explained all the phenomena of sanctity; but, intimates, science is progressing and we are on the way to a full explanation! Yes, the book is interesting, as an epitome of pseudo-science.

**REASONS ALL WRONG**  
But it is not for that reason that I have referred to it now. She gives her reasons why Teresa Martin was canonized. The reasons are all wrong, and contrary to the plain facts. These facts can be known by anybody who takes the trouble to read the "process" of investigation by which the Congregation of Rites was led to recommend the canonization of Teresa Martin to the Holy Father. The same is true in the canonization of any other Saint. The requirements can be stated in two sentences:

(1) On the sworn testimony of witnesses who have known the candidate it must be proved that he, or she, had practiced virtue in

an heroic degree, persevered in to his or her death. (2) Two miracles due to the intercession of the candidate after his, or her, death.

Let us now see to what causes Madame Delarue-Mardrus attributes the sanctity and canonization of Teresa Martin—some of the causes. They are all of the same quality. In this case we can apply Virgil's advice, *ex omni sermone*. "I have referred," she says, "to those passages in her book on which her canonization was based." And, to leave no doubt about her meaning, we find this on another page: "I have said, and the Carmelites of Lisieux do not deny it, that it is the *Story of a Soul* (the Saint's autobiography) that caused her to be canonized."

Now, there is no Saint in the Calendar who was put there because of any books, or passages in books, which they wrote. The reason is plain. An author can (and many have done it) write like an archangel and fall very far short of exceptional sanctity. Moreover, an autobiography is but the personal testimony of one's self. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote a shelf-full of books.

They are not considered in the "process" of her canonization—except to show that they contained nothing against faith or morals—and in the "process" for the canonization of the Little Flower there is not a word about "her book." But "the Carmelites of Lisieux did not deny it." Why should they have denied it? and that before, the charge was made? Should they have denied Madame Mardrus's falsehood by anticipating it? Books written by Saints (e. g. St. Augustine and St. Teresa of Jesus) enhance their prestige as authors writing in the interest of religion; and after their canonization such books add to their prestige and authority also as Saints. But that is quite different from saying that the books "caused their canonization."

**FALSE EXPLANATION**  
Equally interesting—and false—is the Madame's explanation of why Teresa Martin attained to exceptional sanctity. She writes: "I will now attempt to show how the career of a Saint was irresistibly forced on this child. . . . We must remember that marriage was not the true vocation of either of her parents; one had wished to enter the great St. Bernard Monastery, the other the order of the Sisters of Charity." Teresa Martin's exceptional sanctity was, accordingly, the result of heredity, environment and irresistible force.

Now, Louis Martin, the Saint's father, had wished to become a monk. He was sent back home by the Superiors of the monastery at which he had applied and told it was not his vocation. Zelle Guerin, the Saint's mother, had wished to be a nun. But the Superior of the Convent at which she applied advised her that it was not her vocation. Her sister, a nun, gave her the same advice. These two later met and married. Such, they decided, was their vocation. They lived thereafter in perfect harmony, love and conjugal fidelity. They brought up a family of five daughters who loved one another, loved their parents and were loved by their parents. Yet "marriage was not the true vocation" of the parents of this exemplary, ideal, Christian family! It would be interesting to know what Madame Mardrus considers "a true vocation" to the married life.

We have at least a partial answer in her own writings and in her own life. One, and the best

(Continued on Page 18)

"Ring up my broker, Miss Jones."  
"Yes, sir, stock or pawn?"

## Army Administration Course At RBI

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