

Therese — 'Saint Of The Little Way'

Installment IV
'LITTLE QUEEN'

Marie was thirteen, Pauline eleven, Leonie, six, and Celine four when Therese was born. Consequently, they were old enough to take that conscious and continuous pleasure in the baby which every girl who has had a small sister always remembers as one of the most delightful sensations of her life.

They all went about the house on tiptoe when she was asleep and spoke to each other in guarded whispers. They learned to play quiet games, and when she woke, they rushed to the side of her cradle, hugging and kissing her, calling out to their father that they were sure they had seen her smile, summoning their mother to come to look at the color of the baby's eyes. For a little while their happiness in her was unclouded. Then their beautiful baby sister stopped smiling and lay limp and languid, her blue eyes closed, and they were stricken.

Their mother had been unable to nurse her; and in the seventies artificial feeding of babies was still in an experimental state that it was nearly always disastrous. A wet nurse was indispensable under such circumstances, and a wet nurse who was decent and trustworthy, as well as clean and vigorous, was almost impossible to find.

Babies died by the hundreds, even in well-to-do families, from sheer starvation. Zelle Martin herself must have seen many who today would easily be saved. But she had no intention of permitting this to happen to her baby as soon as she was conscious of the character of the crisis, she set out on foot at break of dawn for Semalie, a

village a few miles from Alencon. She knew of a woman there, a peasant named Rose Taille, who might be able to save her child.

Some instinct probably warned her that she must present her plea dramatically if she were to do so successfully. She had at her disposal the means of sending someone to her errand for her or of going by carriage, at a conventional hour, herself. But her sudden appearance at the small thatched cottage where La Petite Rose, her stolid husband Moïse, and their four children dwelt, had the desired effect. It startled Moïse to the point of overriding his objections to a foster daughter, and it moved Rose to immediate sympathy for the baby who was so desperately ill.

She agreed to return to Alencon at once with Madame Martin, and though after she had started Moïse—recovering from the spell which Zelle had laid upon him—had a change of heart and sent one of her small sons after Rose to fetch her home, she dispatched him in short order back to his father, and herself went on her way.



THERESE AND HER MOTHER, ZELLE MARTIN

The baby was apparently mortally ill when they reached the little house on the rue de Saint-Blaise. Rose gathered it into her strong arms and hid it against her full breast. But reassurance as her gesture was the expression of her kindly face betrayed her. It was evident that she believed she had been summoned too late.

Zelle, her strong spirit broken at last, fled to her room and flung herself on her knees. She could not watch and wait for the death of another child; the resignation she had shown when she lost the others had been

thanks that death had laid so gently a hand on her. Then suddenly Therese opened her eyes and smiled!

FOSTER MOTHER
There could be no further question of separating her from Rose; and since Rose could not leave Moïse and her own children, there was nothing to do but to send Therese to Semalie. Until she was weaned, she never again left of her foster mother's sight. The existence of Rose, like that of most French peasants, was made up of heavy drudgery and endless toil, but she accepted her lot in life with the placid patience characteristic of her kind and she showed remarkable resourcefulness in the care of her small charge.

When she went out into the fields to work, she took Therese with her in a wheelbarrow, making a nest of hay for the baby in the bottom of this, while she was doing her milking, she knotted the baby securely in her wide apron, which served as a hammock, and when she required complete freedom of all her limbs for her labor, she fastened the baby ingeniously to the cow itself.

This family cow, whose name was La Rousse — Russell Lady — was a very important member of the peasant household. She was the only cow which Moïse and Rose possessed and she cherished her with that fostering affection which the French habitually lavish on animals. While fastening Therese securely on the ample back of Russell Lady, Rose probably addressed them both in terms equally endearing.

FIRST BIRTHDAY
Little Therese, as she rode on Russell Lady's back and slept on the fragrant hay piled up on the wheelbarrow, had rapidly outgrown her fragility. By the time she was ten months old, she could stand alone. When her first birthday rolled around, she was walking; and before she went back to her parents' home, at the age of fifteen months, she was talking, too.

Her pleasant little face was framed with fair curls and wreathed in bright smiles. She was so fleet of foot that it was impossible to keep up with her, so merry that her laughter echoed continually through the house and garden. She loved to leap into her little swing, to go soaring up into the air, higher and higher and higher. She loved to ride a cock-horse on her father's outstretched boot, to tag after him when he went fishing. She loved birds and their nests, flowers and their perfume, brooks and their music, trees and their shade.

All the family letters written at this period reveal her as a delightful little girl. "My Therese is gentle and darling as a cherub, she will have a charming character, we see that already, her smile is so sweet." "My little Therese is becoming more and more adorable, she prattles from morning to night and says her prayers like an angel." "Therese is a little fairy, the joy of all the family, and she is remarkably intelligent, too!"

THERESE'S SISTERS
Zelle Martin's pen glided rapturously over the paper as she wrote to her brother, Isidore Guerin, who lived in Lisleux, and to her elder daughters, who were still at school in Le Mans. It was a joyous period for the entire Martin family. Marie had been gravely ill with typhoid fever when Therese was a baby, and the aftermath of this illness had been long and tedious. But she had finally made a good recovery, and the little girls were now all well and happy, devotedly attached to one another and to their parents. There was a strong family resemblance among them, both mentally and physically.

All were gifted, and all were extremely pretty, though the dark rich coloring of Marie, Pauline, and Celine was strikingly different from that of their sisters, Leonie and Therese, who were blue-eyed, and golden-haired. Marie, the eldest, had been nicknamed "Diamond" by her father because she was so brilliant and so strong; and carrying the fantasy inspired by his trade still further, he nicknamed Pauline "Lovely Pearl." The qualities of steadfastness

and reliability of energy and will power, which were to prove so pronounced in later years, were already beginning to be felt in these elder sisters, so were Celine's qualities of buoyancy and wit.

Africa Reports Religious Growth
Nairobi, British East Africa (NC) — Archbishop David Mathew, Apostolic Delegate to British East and West Africa, has just issued a report that reveals the presence of 2,216 sisters in teaching and missionary work in the area. There are 23 institutes and approximately 367 missionary centers.

The report points out the importance of the work performed by these sisters in the development of Catholic communities in Africa. "For 50 years," said the prelate, "the Sisters of the old established Missionary Congregations have given themselves to the direct teaching and caring for the women and children."

By FRANCES PARRINSON KEYS

the release of her generation regarding bodily pain and her condition was already desperate when it was diagnosed.

MOTHERHOOD GILES
The loss of Zelle Martin's death was a terrible one for the entire family. But heavily as it fell on the elder daughters and the bereaved widower — who was not only bowed with grief but also bereaved by the prospect of bringing up five motherless little girls — its effect upon Therese was perhaps most disastrous of all.

She was five years old, and she was passionately attached to her mother. She could not even climb up the stairs without paying, at each tread in call out to her, and not until she heard the reassuring response to her cry of "Mamma! Mamma!" would she go another step. Now suddenly there was no answer to her call. Something vital, something joyous, went out of her, never to be recaptured. All the "Christmas Games" which descended upon her ten years later and which she has so so lovingly described, she has been essentially friendly; she became instinctively shy, she had shown occasional beautiful flashes of independence and vivacity; she became withdrawn, shy, subdued, she had always smiled spontaneously; she began to cry constantly. "The little fairy, the joy of the entire family" had been transformed into a child whose celestial qualities were haled by darkness instead of light.

In some circles there was perhaps a tendency to make these observations tedious and tedious or conducive to impatience and sentimentality, but far more often children took pleasure in their prayers, rejoiced in the protection of guardian angels and were radiant confidence of a Christ Child in their midst.

It was through such media as these that religion was revealed to Therese Martin. Jesus was always to her the "bright light" really, which so many of her generation have begged that He might become, and all the little sisters were happy in their faith, as they were in every phase of their home life. It never seemed to them a dull thing of darkness, it was always luminous and lovely.

PROSPERITY IN LACK
The practices of religion, predominant as these were, in no way interfered with a pattern of living which was gracious in all its phases. The house on the rue de Saint-Blaise, though small, had an arrangement conducive to the amenities of hospitality. The family fortunes, modest at first, had mounted. Indeed, Zelle's revival of lacemaking had proven so profitable that Louis-Joseph gave more and more of his time toward helping her with the direction of this now thriving industry, and eventually gave up his small jewelry shop altogether. With a suitable income assured for his wife and children, he also felt justified in permitting himself more time for his favorite pursuit, which was fishing.

The whole tenor of family existence was peaceful and pleasant; it seemed destined to flow along indefinitely in the same quiet channels. Only Zelle knew how gravely it was threatened. For years she had concealed a worrying cancer. She had both the fortitude and

Face of Nazis To be Ordained
The Rev. (D.P.) Conroy, pastor of the Holy Trinity Church, is to be ordained by the Bishop of Rochester, N. Y., on March 15, 1950. Fr. Conroy, who was ordained in 1942, is a native of New York and has served in various capacities in the diocese. He is a member of the Holy Trinity Church and is a devoted worker for the parish.

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