

ALESSANDRO TAMBORINI

The servant of Charity

THE BLESSED LUIGI GUANELLA

FONDER OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY
OF THE DAUGHTERS OF S. MARY OF PROVIDENCE

*Translated from Italian by
Gerald Philip Cohen, C. S. C.
(Congregation of Holy Cross)*

POSTULAZIONE GENERALE DEI SERVI DELLA CARITÀ
VIA BERNARDINO TELESIO 4 B - ROMA

Quoad nos imprimi potest

Roma, 28 Maii 1964

Sac. Carolus De Ambroggi

Superior Generalis Servorum a Charitate

Nihil obstat :

Roma, 8 Julii 1964

Nicolaus Ferraro, S.R.C., Adsector

Fidei Sub-Promotor Generalis

Imprimatur :

Cunei, 22 - 6 - 1964

Can. Pellegrino Stephanus, Vic. gen.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

801	pag.	108
112	»	112
121	»	121
124	»	124
The Young Mountain boy	pag.	5
First studies and adventures	»	14
The Seminary	»	20
By which way?	»	24
Among the people	»	32
Pastor of a small flock	»	38
Without blemish - Without fear	»	47
With Don Bosco	»	53
The Founder who was a failure	»	62
In confinement	»	70
« There is a home up there »	»	74
New trials	»	84
The Foundation of a work	»	92
The work grows	»	95
The Daughters of S. Mary of Providence	»	100

The Servants of Charity	pag. 108
Divine Providence	» 115
An ardent Undertaking	» 121
Extension of the work	» 124
For youth and others	» 132
Fervor at work	» 137
In all of Italy	» 144
Switzerland	» 151
A Devout Pilgrim	» 156
In the Eternal City	» 159
Loyalty to the Pope	» 169
To pray and to suffer	» 176
His character	» 181
For the victims of the earthquake	» 185
Among the Italiens in America	» 191
The setting of the sun	» 200
« Others will take my place »	» 207
The growth of the Institutes	» 211
« Toward his Glory »	» 218
The Educational Houses of the D. Guanella	
Foundation	» 223

CHAPTER ONE

THE YOUNG MOUNTAIN BOY

There is a road that opens into a mountain pass called Spluga between Italy and Switzerland, which winds from Chiavenna to the Swiss Canton of Grigioni. In the heart of the San Giacomo Valley traversed by a fast-flowing stream called Liro, lies the town of Campodolcino.

After a half hour of climbing steep paths you will come upon a small village of Campodolcino called Fraciscio, a section situated between green pastures and dark pine forests. It is cut off from civilization by a river which the people call the Rabbiosa.

It was here that Blessed *Luigi Guanella* was born on December 19, 1842, and baptized the following day.

In this far-flung outpost of the Diocese of Como and the province of Sondrio, at one time under Austrian domination, life was as simple as it had been in days gone by Lorenzo, Luigi's father, stern

in face and manners, still dressed as had his Spanish forebears. He made his living from the small portion of land which he owned. Luigi's mother, Maria Bianchi, was a woman without formal education, but possessed of exceptional prudence, gentleness of manner and piety. The family consisted of thirteen children. Luigi was the ninth. Their numerous children were a consolation and blessing to Lorenzo and Maria, just as children are to all good parents.

Patriarchal Customs

Pa Lorenzo heard Mass each morning, if at all possible. In the evening, the family gathered to recite the rosary led by their father. In the winter they read together the gospel stories or the lives of the saints, pausing to make pious comments on what they learned. During Lent no one drank wine in Guanella's house, and during Holy Week the family ate nothing but corn meal (*polenta*) and water. Even the strangers who came too, had the courtesy not to smoke in what the town called their time of penance. In fact, no one smoked in the town. A man who came from another place and continued his habit was called by the nickname of « *Pepantel* » — pipe smoker.

On the Feast of St. Rocco, patron of Fraciscio, Pa Lorenzo would cook a large boiler of savory rice, *risotto*, which he served generously to all who came, many from a distance. The family enjoyed Pa's stories about the amusing episodes and characters he encountered this way. Pa Lorenzo particularly enjoyed these: « St. Joseph, painted in the sanctuary of our church, was seen in the face of an old man who had lived almost always in the mountains. At one hundred twenty years of age, he was invited to come down because the men desired to learn his recipe for a long life. The old man came, and in answer to their questions replied: "I eat *polenta* (corn meal) three times a day with a little butter and cheese. I am careful to keep my extremities dry and warm, and I am almost never ill. and now that you have seen me, I shall return to my mountain, a two-hour climb." »

Another favorite story was this one: « Some men who could not continue their journey because of a heavy snowfall were invited by the mountaineers have some of their soup, but refused in disgust upon seeing it. »

The next day they were obliged to ask: « Have you any of that poor stuff left which you had last night for supper? » Life was extremely humble but satisfying to those who lived in the Guanella household.

Early Memories

For twenty-four years Pa Lorenzo held the office of first deputy under the Austrian government. Under the Italian rule, he became mayor of Campodolcino where it was said that his word was like that of a prophet. His authoritative manner notwithstanding, he was loved and esteemed by all for his uprightness. Little Luigi, at about four years of age, began to comprehend his father's extraordinary strength and goodness.

The struggle which had driven the foreign invaders from Lombardy still echoed in the minds of the people.

It even reached children of isolated mountain towns such as Campodolcino because their Valtellina, too, together with the valleys of which it is the most important played an important part in the armed effort to send the invaders away. The mind of the child must have received vivid impressions, if not from what he saw, certainly from the discussions he heard in the nearby towns of Sondrio, Como, and especially Milan where people had fought behind barricades to the sound of hammered bells. During these years of Luigi's childhood new social and political trends were rising, brought about by upheavals in nations and destined to change traditions and customs.



FRACISCIO

(Sondrio) :

the home town of the Blessed.

Growing Up Together

Of all his brothers and sisters, Luigi was most fond of his younger brother Gaudenzio of whom he spoke in later years with a sadness that recalled the original shock of his untimely death. Shortly before his twentieth birthday, Gaudenzio plunged to his death while hiking through the neighboring mountains.

Luigi's older sister Caterina had a special place in her heart for her younger brother. She was a lovely girl, and possessed a beautiful singing voice which she used for God's glory, singing in the parish church and teaching others to do so. Luigi and Caterina were kindred souls in their love for the poor. As children playing in the caves nearby hills, they would mix water and soil and pretend it was food they were giving to the poor. « When we were grown-ups, we will make soup and give it to the poor, » they said.

What Did The Old Man Want?

Among his childhood recollections, Don Luigi always treasured an experience of apparent insignificance that remained vividly alive in his memory. In his own words:

« I was about five or six years old. On the morning of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, patron of the parish of Campodolcino, I was coming down from Fraciscio when I met my father talking with my brother-in-law.

He asked me, "Do you want to celebrate the Feast of St. John?" Then he bought me a bag of mints. At this moment, the last bell rang for the Solemn Mass.

Not wishing to go into Church with candy, I looked around for a place to hide it, and spotted a pile of wood nearby.

There was no one around, but then I heard the clapping of hands. I looked up and saw an old man standing near me stretching out his hand with eyes on my hand. He was thin, dressed in short pants and grey wool socks. He had white hair. Terrified, I quickly hid my candy. I looked up again but he was gone.

I was overcome with a remorseful guilt. Call it what you will, an illusion or a vision, but it is something I will never forget. I will always have it before my eyes. So vivid did it seem that were I an artist, I could reproduce the tender look of his eyes, the softness of his gaze, and the eager stretching forth of his hand. »

First Fervor

At seven years of age, when he received confirmation, he also made his first confession. He prepared diligently for it, arousing sentiments of sorrow and hatred for sin and a strong desire to correct every little defect. He attached great importance to this sacramental preparation and was helped by his mother in making his first examination of conscience.

Although it was the custom to receive First Communion at twelve years of age, an exception was made in the case of Luigi permitting him to receive it at the age of nine. We can only imagine the dispositions and feelings of this child who had so carefully prepared for the great day.

April 8, 1852 was memorable for another experience. Returning from the church, he turned towards his grandfather's house. To avoid being distracted he went into the nearby meadow to a favorite little spot. Here he reflected upon his great privilege and joy and spoke intimately with Our Lord Whom he had just received. He felt rising up within his mind and heart an overflowing love which in its ecstasy produced a sweetness enlightening his mind and leading his will to a resolution. He would consecrate his entire future to the fulfillment of a holy ideal: to sanctify himself and in so doing, to save others.

From this time until his death, he remembered this moment as « one of sweetness and happiness. » He did not speak of it openly until toward the end of his earthly life, when he returned for a last visit to the scenes of his childhood in the company of his beloved spiritual son, Don Leonardo Mazzucchi. Resting his gaze on the spot and then turning from it, he described his experiences to the priest who was destined to be his third successor as superior general of the Servants of Charity.

Education at Home

Even before going to school, Luigi had begun to work. His jobs were to watch the sheep or to climb up and down the hillsides with his mother, helping her carry bundles of wood and other burdens. Everything had to be carried on the shoulders of the people for no one on this mountainside possessed any work animals.

His obedience and devotion were so well known, even among his own young friends, that many years later, one of them used to say: « When my mother wanted to reprimand me, she would say " Watch and learn to do it as Luigi does it. " »

One episode which shows the kind of education he received from his parents occurred when he was

about seven. He was watching a neighbor's sheep for which he received a little money. This he was quick to spend. When his father heard of it, he first of all reprimanded Luigi in the presence of the neighbor for accepting pay for a favor he should have done anyway: secondly, he obliged the lad to return what was left over, while he made up the difference. Wise guidance! Characters are formed with victories over this kind of little weaknesses.

A Sad Good-by

When Luigi was about eight years old, many of his relative left for the United States. « I remember it as if it were yesterday, » he himself wrote years later, « when around 1850, my aunt's family left for America amid tears and promises to write and tell all their joys and sorrows, their plans, all that would be happening. » Actually, he maintained intimate contact for many years with the American branch of his family. The first of Don Luigi's charitable works received financial contributions from these good people.

CHAPTER TWO

FIRST STUDIES AND ADVENTURES

Luigi learned the elements of reading, writing and arithmetic from a curate who lived in the neighborhood. Later he went to the elementary school in Pianazzo where a relative of his was parish priest.

He was ten years of age when leaving home for the first time and it seemed that he was going into a great world. He saw horses and wagons and carriages unknown in Fraciscio: at home everything was carried on one's back from seeding time to harvest. Formerly he had seen horses « hitched to buses » from a distance and had enjoyed telling how he had watched them pass by Campodolcino loaded with silk. Still, to meet them on the road was so frightening that he would run and hide in the meadow.

His natural courage developed, however: and he found great pleasure in trotting alongside the horses, trying to outrun them, jumping on their saddles

while they were running. This growing boy joined his companions in their feats of daring-jumping from one height to another, sliding down long hills of snow, crossing strong currents, or hanging on to a precipice to gather alpine flowers. One day he was struck by the postal sled and thrown between the legs of a horse. He was sure he had been protected by his guardian angel. Another time, he fell into an angry river during its first thaw and saved himself by reaching its banks and holding on until help came. His most fortunate escape from danger was his rescue from being ground under the wheels of a mill. When he was between twelve and fourteen years of age, he was enveloped by flames when his bed caught fire from a candle he had been using to read.

A Priest?

The Diocese of Como was plagued by a very serious hardship, a scarcity of vocations. This was due in part to the political conditions of the time which stirred the hot blood of the young men. Even seminarians were deterred from a life of recollection and study and their priestly goals.

Luigi's priest-uncle was provost of Campodolcino and had sent five young men from the village of Fraciscio to the seminary. Among them was Luigi's older brother Lorenzo. His uncle recognized

the necessary spiritual and intellectual aptitudes in the young Luigi.

On his part, Luigi had been giving thought to his future vocation. One day he spontaneously confided his desire to his parents and then to his uncle. His parents, happy in having given one son, were even more pleased to give another. At once arose the problem of assuming the financial burden of another long career of study. The family was large but their trust in Providence was great.

The twelve-year old boy anxiously awaited his parents' decision. Unexpectedly the news came. As he was coming down the valley one day, carrying fodder on his back, his father stopped him and said, « Luigi, get ready: You will be able to enter the seminary. » His uncle had obtained a scholarship for him in the famous Gallio College at Como.

His sister Caterina, when she heard the news, looked at her brother who was still dumbfounded. With happy tears in her eyes, she spread out her arms and said: « Now you will be a priest. »

Preparatory School Days

After being presented to Bishop Carlo Romano of Como, whom he thanked for the favor of a scholarship, Luigi entered the school on Octo-

ber 8, 1854. Although somewhat overwhelmed by the size and beauty of the college building, he soon experienced homesickness for his small home and his mountains. He no longer heard the voices of his mother and dear ones. Now he had left his carefree days and ways and was entering upon a discipline which would regulate every hour of the day by the sound of the bell. He felt keenly all the new restrictions and admitted that he experienced difficulty in overcoming the weariness attached to adapting to a new life.

In school the Somaschi Fathers inculcated a deep piety in their students, especially a deep filial love for the Mother of God whose Immaculate Conception was proclaimed as a Dogma on December 8, 1854. The definition of this Dogma produced a worldwide response, and upon the soul of the young student, an everlasting devotion to Mary. Later, in his apostolate, Don Luigi was known to spread Marian devotion while he set himself to imitate those virtues which make Mary so pleasing in the sight of God.

His success in studies is evident from his grade on the general register, «Excellent.» He maintained this degree so steadily that at graduation when a student was chosen for honors in having profited most during the course of study as well as having been the

most diligent in application, the choice just had to fall upon Luigi Guanella.

Arms and Books

Piedmont, helped by France, was preparing for war against Austria in 1859. Hate for the foreigner (this time it was Austria) had increased and the fire of insurrection had already been enkindled. Luigi and his school friends were still too young for military service: nevertheless, two of the boys enrolled as Garibaldini at 16 years of age.

The anxiety of knowing the outcome of battle often overcame the desire to study. So preoccupied were some while the fight was underway that they left the seminary. On the 20th of May a battle occurred on the heights of San Fermo within the earshot of the school. The students gathered in the schoolyard to take part in the victory of Garibaldi as he and his army triumphantly entered their city of Como.

After the victories of Solferino and San Martino, the official asked that the school be put at the disposition of the army for the wounded and sick French soldiers. The students adopted a quasi-military regime and even wore caps similar to the infantry soldiers. On certain days they assembled in the square for military exercises.

Young Luigi went through these days with the sentiments of a good Italian but without letting his military enthusiasm descend to political passion nor supplant his desire to continue to prepare for the vocation which he valued so highly. Actually, seminary life attracted him all the more. His goal was a priesthood in which he would serve God and his fellow man, especially the poor whose lot he desired to share.

A New Sacrifice

Luigi's preparatory days were coming to an end. True, he had a scholarship all of this time, but his father still had to pay many expenses connected with his education. Now times were especially hard because of poor crop weather.

With difficulty his father had paid a bill of thirteen lire for a new suit. He felt justified in reproving his dear son when once he spent the whole sum of one lira for emergency lodging and food on a vacation trip home on a stormy night.

However, financial difficulty did not constitute an insurmountable barrier. This sacrifice was little enough for a family used to making so many. Whatever they did was done with faith and love so that Luigi would soon be able to become a good priest.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SEMINARY

At the beginning of the scholastic year of 1860, Luigi entered the seminary of San'Abbondio. A short time later, taking in another seminarian from Campodolcino, the rector said to him: « Do as Guanella and you will be happy. »

At the seminary, Luigi plunged into his studies with the ardor of the thirsty wayfarer who has found the sought-for fountain. He won the approval of his teachers and had a particular friend in his professor of physics, Don Serafino Balestra, a famous name in this field.

A close friend of Luigi became ill with a contagious disease and was at death's door. The vice-rector and infirmarian observed all the necessary precautions when going near the patient, but Luigi offered to nurse him. He watched over him day and night with all the care of a mother, disregarding the recommended precautionary measures.

Realizing his abilities, the rector named Luigi prefect of discipline of the first class in the Lyceum, then of the second class. However, it was not in his make-up to be a superior disciplinarian of his companions: consequently he was frequently reprimanded for not being severe enough. The methods of the day called for repression and rigor, and Luigi had grown up under an effective kindly discipline which he thought to maintain here.

Effects of Political Conditions

« In the Seminary, » Luigi would say, « I had hoped to find greater recollection than in youthful school days, but the fires of the Revolution were burning also in the hearts of the students for the altar. Of the twenty-three of us in the last class of the Lyceum, only half went on to Theology. »

Among the ranks of the clergy an exuberant patriotism could be noted. Some favored the new trends ushered in with the victories, while many feared the traps of a « legal war » being waged against the Church. Thus two tendencies could be traced, a compromising attitude toward the liberal views of the day and an uncompromising one based upon the dangers involved and past experiences of other countries. *The Carbonari* who at first had only

a patriotic function, now found a common cause to join with Masons who had never hidden their irreligious ends. As often happens, patriotism and irreligion give rise to a fatal struggle.

Bishop Carlo Romano died at Como. Because of the conditions of the time, his see remained vacant from 1855 until 1858.

The general political trends necessarily had repercussions even in the seminary. The clerics as well as their teachers took sides for one viewpoint or the other, and this often led to strong feelings.

At last it was thought best to distract and occupy excited minds by publishing a bi-weekly newspaper. The promotor was Guanella. In his writings, he began to express his own ideas and let it be known that he had taken the uncompromising point of view. With the Church and with the Pope, he showed himself an enemy of liberalism and Masonry.

Student of Theology

In October 1862, the young cleric entered the theological seminary. He had the good fortune to have as spiritual director his relative Don Gaudenzio Bianchi. The youth had a high regard for this « venerable figure, austere and pious, » who became his example for a life of prayer and apostolate; for this

good priest had been successful in winning converts among non-Catholics. Luigi's spiritual director was most interested in cultivation of virtue in the young seminarian but refused to permit him to continue some self-inflicted penances he had devised. The student's intense application to studies caused him after a while to have severe headaches. A sore throat persisted through the cold season. His strong constitution was undermined and his professors warned him not to abuse his strength.

« In our day, » he writes, « we did not have the conveniences of today. We studied in the dormitory. In the classroom the windows were ornamented with frost for a whole month at a time. Only one day a semester was allowed for a trip or a visit from our parents. » The Lord usually draws his ministers from among the poor: and these strong Aarons with scarcely enough clothing, blessed with healthy stomachs and appetites, could not always be satisfied. So, in all, it put them in a state of continuous sacrifice, but there was satisfaction in having these sincere, generous and congenial companions who knew how to enrich the evening recreation (even for one hour) with real fun and entertainment.

CHAPTER FOUR

BY WHICH WAY?

The character of the Seminarist Guanella manifested itself every day more generous and courageous. The missionary life seemed to him his ideal.

Pius IX. wished to have a foreign missionary seminary in Italy and preferred its location in Lombardy. The groundwork was done by Father Supries who had been a missionary in the Indies and later became vicar of the Carthusians of Pavia. He visited the seminaries and aroused great enthusiasm among the seminarians, especially those from the area of Milan. The year 1850 saw the beginning at Saronno of the Seminary for the Foreign Missions. The first group came from the local area and included Giovanni Mazzucconi, destined for future glorious martyrdom in Oceania.

Luigi's friend, Giambattista Scalabrini, later Bishop and Founder of a religious congregation, was fired with the missionary spirit and wished to enter



GUALDERA

of Fraciscio:

the Alpine House S. Louis.

On this mountain-side, young Louis
« passed happy and most blissful moments » when, on the day of his first
Communion, he had a vision of the Holy
Virgin

this seminary. However, his Bishop, desperately in need of vocations in his own diocese, said: « I have need of you. Your Indies are in Italy. » About 1863, Guanella too entertained the same thoughts. When he made them known to the Bishop he received the same reply as had his friend. The two seminarians, Scalabrini in his last year of theology and Guanella in his, first, had one year together in which they could confide to each other their zealous hopes. Their common experiences and aspirations led to a life-time of beautiful friendship. Now they could trust only in God's leading them whither He wished.

Don Bosco and Don Cottolengo

An important contact was made at this time which Don Luigi later recorded: « The Lord saw to it that I should meet Don Bosco and Don Cottolengo, whom I admired and grew to love the more I learned of them. » (Together with Don Cafasso these three later earned the Church's declaration of sanctity in recognition of their virtues and work among the poor.)

Don Giovanni Bosco had opened in 1846 an oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Turin. The Oratory included a boarding house for boys and day and night classes for youth. This was destined to become

an immense apostolate which would spread throughout the entire world for the education of youth.

St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo in 1827, on the other hand, had preceded the work of Don Bosco. Cottolengo began from an inspiration he received when he saw a pitiful case of a mother who died in need of medical care. He realized the need of opening an institution to the poor and set about providing it as an example of Christian Providence.

Most probably Luigi first made contact with the works of these holy men as a seminarian. Now he had chances to perform charitable, educational, and particularly catechetical work, thereby seeing firsthand the many needs of the poor. Luigi had probably placed some boys in the Salesian schools and some poor in the House of Providence founded by Cottolengo. Thus he saw personally these great works of Christian charity. He desired to imitate their apostolate in his priestly life.

Good Sense and a Kind Heart

The young seminarian achieved an excellent reputation. During his vacation periods he returned to the people of his loved valley and found ways to assist the sick and lonely aged. One time he spent one whole month of his precious vacation caring for

a sick, helpless man until he died. He also made a special study of botany to enable him to utilize the known herbs which had medicinal value.

Besides visiting the sick, Luigi found that he could help children while their parents were hard at work in the fields. He undertook the supervision of a group which responded well to the kind heart and noble mind of the priest-to-be.

Luigi sought always means to improve the hard lot of his people. One day it occurred to him while walking from Fraciscio to Madesimo that the clear stream of this mountain section could be channelled to meet their needs more conveniently than the Rabbiosa River was doing. He told this to his father who as mayor was able to realize the idea.

The young Guanella loved manual work. He knew carpentry as well as painting. When anyone expressed surprise at his proficiency he said that he wanted to get accustomed to this work so that later he would not have to call a carpenter, painter or plasterer if he wanted to put a nail in the wall.

First Steps to the Altar

Ordained subdeacon, Don Luigi was allowed to help out in the parish of Prosto where he was destined to exercise his priestly duties later on. Each

Saturday found him in this town teaching catechism. « When the evening ceremonies were ended, » he says: « I set out for "home" (the seminary) walking about twelve miles along the country road. When, as sometimes happened, I couldn't get back until quite late, so as not to disturb the house I would spend the night at a local "hotel", a haystack near the seminary. »

Thus, this period gave him experience both in working with youth and a foretaste of the joy of working for Christ.

In the fall, he returned happily to the seminary to prepare for the approaching ordination. He added additional prayer and recollection to his daily practices.

The Exiled Bishop

The diocese of Como passed through a sad period due to the political laws interfering with the appointment of bishops. The Holy See could never renounce its right to choose and name bishops. The State would not recognize this authority, and so the government confiscated Church property. The Bishops were not allowed to take possession of their Sees. Their ministry was restricted in many ways while they were reduced to accepting shelter in pri-

vate homes or in religious houses with support coming directly from the faithful.

When Bishop Carlo Romanò died in 1855, his see was left vacant for three years. In 1858, His Excellency Giuseppe Marzorati, able and virtuous but poor in health, came as Como's Bishop. He died within the year. This left the see vacant until 1872, causing great harm to both the faith and morals of the people.

The episcopal palace stood as if in mourning, empty and silent. True, there was a Bishop in Como but he was in the prison of San Donnino. In 1865 he was allowed to take residence but was confined to the theological seminary. He was Bishop Bernardino Frascolla, Bishop of Foggia, condemned to exile far from his diocese by the political authorities.

The Preparation

The exiled Bishop and the young subdeacon Guanella found a common bond in their exceptional love of Holy Mother Church, one eager to start a life of suffering, the other already well on his way as a confessor of the faith. Bishop Frascolla's words exercised great influence over the soul of Don Guanella. On the 24th of February 1866, he ordained his young friend deacon. Many and lengthy were the

talks they had together about the crisis that the Church was currently experiencing. This year provided an intimate experience which Don Luigi's penetrating mind wished to analyze further. He wished to become ever a more useful instrument. He wrote to his friend Don Francesco Adamini (who had promised to preach at his first Mass.) « I want to study, study, study. » He said he already had a foretaste of « the most glorious and holy day of my life. »

The students in the fourth year of theology, now reduced to ten in number, had to go to the episcopal palace, still empty, to make their retreat for the priesthood.

Ordination

Very early on the 26th of May, 1866, the young cleric was ordained in the Bishop's chapel without the usual solemnities. Don Luigi Guanella prostrated himself before the exiled Bishop Frascolla and pronounced the sacred vows. He heard the words of the Bishop resounding as a spiritual testament of a confessor of the faith.

« I remember it as if it were yesterday, » he wrote, « the imposing presence of Bishop Frascolla, the fiery exhortations he gave us, and the kind words he addressed to us after giving the Kiss of Peace. »

The 26th of May — the Feast of St. Philip Neri, the happy Italian priest who drew countless souls to God. He was another favorite model of the kind of apostolate Don Guanella longed to undertake. Don Luigi had reached the height of his ambitions, the priesthood: his soul meditated on the resolve to become ever more worthy.

On the Feast of Corpus Christi, May 31, 1866, still glistening with the holy oil of ordination, Don Luigi celebrated his first Solemn Mass at Prosto in the presence of his mother and father, brothers and sisters. Here he was assigned as curate to the old archpriest.

He took a special interest in instructing youth. With great patience and love, he formed a group of altar boys who were exact in assisting at the ceremonies. Not only did he teach children, he also instructed their parents to pray the Mass with the priest. He helped them learn how to join in the singing of High Mass. Above all he encouraged ever greater devotion to the Holy Eucharist which the young people especially had long neglected.

CHAPTER FIVE

AMONG THE PEOPLE

The young priest took up residence with his pastor in the small rectory. Together they lived a kind of common life in religion. With youthful enthusiasm, Don Luigi set about his first ministry. The young priest was fervent in offering Holy Mass, encouraging attendance at religious services, and hearing confessions. As he met the people, he edified them by his manner, kind and affable yet marked by a reserve.

He took a special interest in instructing youth. With great patience and love, he formed a group of altar boys who were exact in assisting at the ceremonies. Not only did he teach children, he also instructed their parents to pray the Mass with the priest. He helped them learn how to join in the singing of High Mass. Above all he encouraged ever greater devotion to the Holy Eucharist which the young people especially had long neglected.

On the 10th of June 1867, the Society of Italian Catholic Youth came into being, founded by Giovanni Acquaderni and Mario Fani. From its headquarters at Bologna, the bold program of prayer and action spread throughout all of Italy. This courageous profession of faith was intended to provide the benefits of education for the mass of people. Also charitable works were to be undertaken according to the local needs with particular reference to the preservation of the faith from irreligious influence.

Don Guanella was among the first priest to see the value of this kind of Catholic activity and to encourage it. He began at once to put these ideas to work among the young people of the parish. He well understood their needs by now, and he lost no time joining a pioneer effort that would later receive official recognition.

The parish people saw the priest visiting their sick and performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in their midst, and they love him for all of this. The Pastor of the parish loved him still more and considered his assistance invaluable. One day, he took Don Luigi aside and in confidence cautioned him about his health. He forbade him to wear a hair shirt for fear he would injure himself. About this time the old priest chose as his confessor his newly ordained curate, surely a sign of his high esteem.

The School Master

The school, which gradually came under the influence of the assistant priest, constituted another great means of apostolate among a people who for the most part were illiterate.

The first census in 1861 revealed that in the Kingdom of Italy, more than 74% of the people ranging in age from six up were illiterate.

This was caused of course, by the early employment of youth: young boys were sent into the field or to tend sheep at an early age: many were apprenticed as manual laborers in order to earn a small income. Young girls were obliged to care for the little ones at home while their mothers went into the fields. Thus only a small percentage went to school. Illiteracy was a great curse.

Don Guanella placed himself in the vanguard of encouraging the instruction of children. He secured the necessary teacher certification so that he himself might qualify as an elementary school teacher and open classes to a larger group in the surrounding countryside. He hoped to open their minds as well as care for their souls so that their future would be brighter and their lives more enjoyable.

Don Guanella's school taught the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic so necessary for the agricultural population. Yet it could not stop there.

He often sponsored talks on farming and the new methods then being discovered to increase crop production. He worked to convince the old farmers of the value of applying modern methods of cultivation.

Blessed Be the Unfortunate

In the exercises of his ministry, Don Guanella often came into contact with the unhappy, the sick, the retarded, the mentally deficient, the incurables and the aged. These people were often left by the poorer families in a pitiable state in the little yards filled with old lumber or even refuse. His great heart showed a tenderness for plight: and many times he expressed a desire: « Why could not a home be provided to save their human, and above all, Christian dignity? » A tremendous idea, but what a problem to finance it.

He heard of a large family in Fraciscio which had recently lost its mother, leaving a crippled, retarded child, without the proper care. He himself took responsibility for this child, found it a place to live and paid for its care from his meager salary. But he was not rich enough to do this for the many more whom he now found.

One day he saw a pitiful child on the streets of Prosto. The boy, though crippled in body, had the

light of intelligence dim in his dark eyes. Don Guannella went to him as to a little brother, greeted him, and talked to him about going to a place where he could be happy with others. This was to be the House of Providence in Turin. Later he brought the boy there free of charge. Now for the second time he saw Cottolengo's Little House, actually a little city of suffering enlivened by faith, and maintained by a remarkable hidden charity stemming from the founder's trust in Providence. He wanted to learn everything that might possibly help him in his own ministry back in Prosto. To do this, he became friends with the Director, Don Luigi Anglesio, the successor of St. Joseph Cottolengo.

He felt a strong, deep inclination to spend himself for these unhappy children of God. He wanted to build a hospital for the unfortunate of his own valley, to become the benefactor of the souls and bodies of society's castoffs, those whom wordly minds treat as useless. More often it is these souls who may be possessors of tremendous grace, most beautiful in the sight of God.

At Turin, he also visited the establishments of Don Bosco: first, his oratory (combination program for stimulating religious practice as well as providing for recreational and occupational needs) which was attracting large numbers of youth. Then he saw the Church, dedicated to Our Lady Help of Christians.

He thought of the needy children in his native area, his parish, the diocese of Como, where there were no oratories or schools for the children of the poor and where there was a scarcity of vocations to the priesthood.

If only he could bring a branch of Don Bosco's work to Valtellina, to Como. How many children would be helped. He left Turin with a heavy heart blessing these little unfortunates who had now crystallized his dream: a dream destined to enlarge the scope of sacrifice of his priestly life.

The Deserted Cloisters

To better understand what follows, we must recall a sad event of this era: the law of July 7, 1866, which suppressed religious communities. Out from religious houses came consecrated people of God. These people in every condition of health, age, and accomplishments now were forced to seek new associations if they were to continue their vocations undercover. Don Guanella sympathized with « these holy bandits from unholy laws » and pledged himself to aid them. Where? How? God would let him know.

CHAPTER SIX

PASTOR OF A SMALL FLOCK

One year after ordination, he was appointed « spiritual burser » at Savogno. The new curate came to the town with his « official » title, spiritual steward. He felt as a father to those souls entrusted by God to his ministry and his anxiety to help them led his people to say, « Father is always in a hurry. »

Eucharistic Fervor

Foremost in his platform of spiritual reform was his determination to revive devotion to the Holy Eucharist among the people. He introduced frequent and even daily Communion with frequent attendance at weekday Masses, even though they were early ones. He stressed prayer, even taught meditation until it became a practice among the people of the

parish. Young boys, particularly, were encouraged to form this habit, and it produced marvelous fruits in stimulating desires for priestly and religious vocations.

His listeners were stimulated by his sermons and put forth unusual efforts. An old couple, unable to walk, were brought to Mass every morning by their relatives and neighbors. When they both died, during a cold winter season, they were called by their friends, « martyrs of the Mass. »

The energy of this young priest seemed boundless. We hear that he went to say Mass in a distant valley for the conveniences of some mountain villagers on Sunday even though it meant a seven-hour walk for him.

He liked to hear the religious salutation « Praised be Jesus Christ. » Soon some of his people adopted the practice of greeting each other with this prayer even when they met on the street.

During carnival time, some young men tried to start town dances of which he did not approve. When he expressed his regret about this from the pulpit, the idea was dropped and not revived.

« He has the people in the palm of his hand, » some began to say.

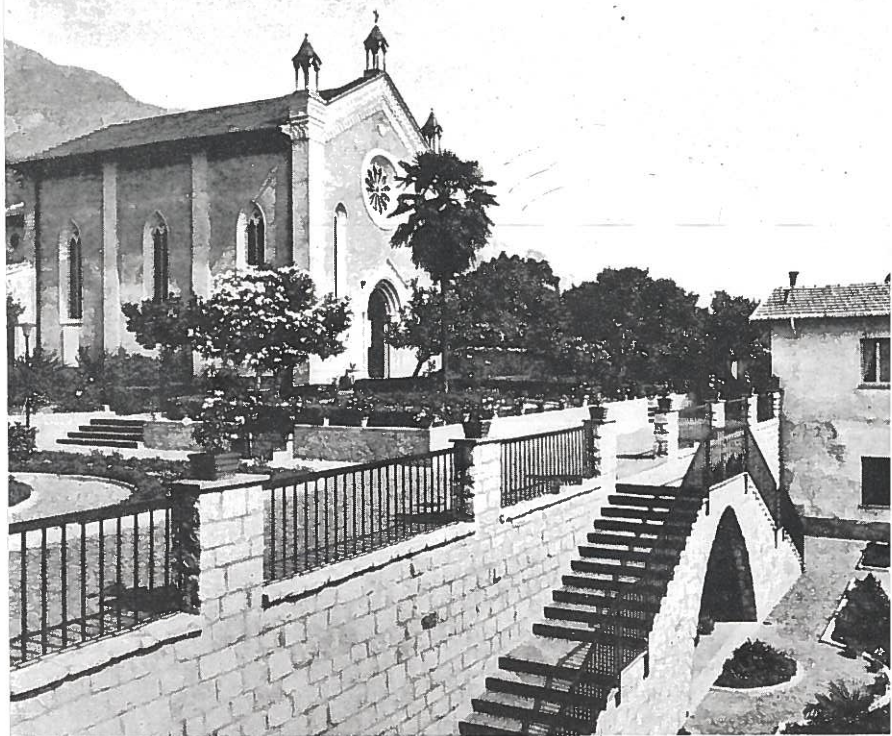
The « Overly Large Hand »

His first housekeeper was one of his older sisters, but things were not easy for her. Actually, she was upset by his prodigality. So much was missing and she often learned that this sick person or that old man had some of it. She contrived to hide the necessities so these would not be given away, but this did not always work. Finally she left him and turned the job over to the younger sister Catherine, then twenty-seven years old and very much like her brother.

Don Luigi used no wine and drank only water. What was saved in this way from table expense he sent in the form of an allowance to his aged father. Gratefully Lorenzo welcomed the little support money, though he would say that his son had a good heart but an « overly large hand. » Don Luigi's only response to this teasing was a smile.

« Don Guanella, » narrated a poor woman of Savogno, « found me, one day, sitting in the square without shoes. It was November and snow covered the ground, but we were desperately poor. He brought me to his house and gave me shoes and gave one of his own shirts for my brother. »

Many years later we have his words recorded by two unknown mountain climbers whom he had found late one fall evening and had given supper and lodging: « When you leave tomorrow, you won't



PIANELLO LARIO :
the first House of Refuge.

have to unlock the door. The house of Don Luigi is always open ».

In 1867 many cases of cholera broke out in the province of Como. Don Guanella desired to do as his great friend Don Scalabrini, who gave such an example of heroism in caring for the sick that he was decorated with a medal. Don Guanella admired the spirit of sacrifice of his friend who showed his great desire for a life of greater heroism than an ordinary parish priest. Duty, Daily faithfulness to one's duty, is this not greater in value?

« Dangerous, that Curate! »

With special interest he sought means to help the sick, the mentally retarded, and the aged through the town and neighboring districts. He gathered groups from the entire district of Chiavenna and found help for them in various ways. Some he brought to the Little House of Providence in Turin.

This mountain country had a number of unfortunate individuals, and it was thought that the causes were frequent intermarriage, insufficient food, and the exhausting labor of young children and women. While the causes were being attacked, the poor were at hand and needed help. Would he dare dream of offering them a haven?

Sometimes he would talk of this dream as a realizable project, at other times as a grace that must be won from Divine Providence. One day in the rectory garden he was discussing this with some clerics and said, « I want to found an institute, will you help me? » With one voice they said « Yes » and jokingly each gave a small coin. Laughing, he took their money and added, « That's all right, this will grow. »

He was « boss » it was said, of his people because he could get whatever he wanted from them, not only in spiritual matters, but also in matters that concerned their daily life. One day he called together a group of workers and announced that the parish church needed to be restored. Who would help? Immediately they volunteered and work got underway. Joining efforts until late in the evenings, they carried stone from the quarry and set about repairing their own parish church.

The mayor, who refused to be involved in this, did not approve. Here was work being carried on to the ringing of a church bell! With stuffy arrogance, he pointed out exaggerated causes for trouble from such a project. He even went so far as to complain to the local prefecture that the stones were being taken from public quarries. His real reason was hidden: too much zeal, too much of a following for a young curate to have! Dangerous!

Further Community Projects

With the help of volunteers, the cemetery was improved and enlarged, as well as landscaped. It turned out to be better than the one the mayor had talked of sometime previously. Around the inside, Don Guanella erected a Way of the Cross and laid out paths through the small woods for processions.

At the crossroads and in the field he built chapels for the Rogation Days. One was dedicated to the Sacred Heart to secure His blessing on the harvest and to prevent plagues, although some said it was a warning and protection for young boys and girls who used to like to gather at night. At the head of the valley, he built another small chapel for those who had to work too far away to get to church conveniently.

The New School

The schoolmaster's post at Savogno became vacant. The Council of Prosto, of which Savogno was a part, appointed Don Guanella, who held teacher certification, to this place. He began his work at once, entrusting the girls to his sister Catherine.

The school needed enlarging and repairs. Imitating the example of their curate whom they found

starting the construction work, the people continued to carry rock, sand and gravel. They built a model school building with the joy of voluntary giving.

Now classes were to begin in the new building. All the children could be accommodated. Would the parents please send them? At his request, they came, freed of their usual work in the fields or shop. Even the girls flocked to Mistress Catherine who taught them reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and household arts. Here was a school the children were happy to attend, What a joy for the teachers, what benefits to the surrounding community!

Someone to be watched...

The Freemasons of the area had already taken stock of the moral strength of this disturbing priest, and higher civil authorities had already singled him out as « someone to watch. » These authorities did not like the idea of his school which had been built with such great love and sacrifice on the part of the people and which was now very successful. This all was a threat to their own program which could not develop if this popularity continued.

He « stole » too many children to give to the Lord, they said of him. « He wants to populate Valtellina with priests and nuns. » This accusation,

similar to those against Don Bosco, became a burden which Don Guanella carried for ten years together with other slanders.

He was called a priest intemperate in his ministry, one who has dangerous influence over the people, a conjurer who charms people with his words and gets them to do ridiculous things.

The Drama Begins

The mayor of the town wore a friendly smile when he met the priest, but now he worked undercover to get him dismissed from the teaching position. A clever plot was devised.

One evening, there appeared at the rectory the secretary of the district, together with a woman who was introduced as a prospective teacher who might expand the school program. Would it be possible, they asked, to lease the school he had built? The priest suspected that more was behind this direct and simple request. Of course he was not completely free to answer this.

Fortunately, as matters turned out, the school assessor and most of the municipal councillors refused to accept the mayor's proposal to use the building because of a previous experience which had produced unhappy results.

The idea of a new school teacher was not too well received by the townspeople. Don Guanella, however, readied himself for future action. If deprived of the school position, he could continue evening classes and have children under instruction, even if it meant using his own home.

He wrote to the Archpriest of Piure, then superintendent of Catholic school instruction on December 7, 1871: « Principally, the councillors and assessor were indignant because of the anticlerical intrigues used against the priest to deprive him of the school. » He continued to say that he had tried to remain as neutral as possible under the circumstances, trusting to the good will of the town's own people. But it was clear that much more had been intended than just the removal of a person: rather, a war against the priest had begun and an effort had been started to introduce the ideas of freethinkers even in this remote town.

This controversy shows an episode typical of the troubled times in which Don Guanella lived. The characters of the mayor and his secretary are representative of a small minority insidiously at work against the good intended by the Church, as contrasted with the overwhelming majority of the townspeople who held their priest in high regard.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WITHOUT BLEMISH — WITHOUT FEAR

As we have seen in the last chapter, the Council of Como was spreading its evil influence even into Valtellina and Sondrio. The Freemasons utilized the Suspect Law of 1866 to spread their influence. This law read in part: « To be confined to their homes for a period of not more than a year, all unemployed, vagabonds, and all persons held suspect. » Contradictory, vague words were these. It application classified « bishops and priests » as suspects.

The First Vatican Council

On the 28th of June, 1868, Pope Pius IX. announced that the first Vatican Ecumenical Council would be held beginning December 8, 1869. He called for intense participation by the entire Catholic world despite the difficulties then existing in many

countries which might interfere with religious business.

The Council looked at the vast spiritual and social panorama of the times. It singled out contemporary errors, both dogmatic and moral, which were to be condemned: rationalism, liberalism, and above all, materialistic socialism. However, after the solemn declaration of the infallibility of the Pope on July 18, 1870, the work of the Council was interrupted due to hostile political conditions: the war which had broken out between France and Germany, and the fall of Rome on September 20, 1870.

There arose the serious Roman Question. The Italian government believed it had settled the problem with the Law of Guarantee of May 13, 1871 but in reality this Law was not to be accepted because of its conditions. The long conflict that ensued will be passed over in this writing but we will mention its settlement with the Act of Conciliation of February 11, 1929, and rejoice over the acquired peace which returned in Pope Pius XI.'s unforgettable words, « God to Italy » and « Italy to God. »

The Dawn of a Practical Future

At this time an attempt was made to popularize a kind of « religious liberalism » which preached

respect for all beliefs, or as was said « opinions. » Even faith and morals were open to « opinions. »

Don Guanella, implacable enemy of liberalism and socialism, could see this clever deceit de-Christianising the world, insinuating its friendly but poisonous doctrine and results even into the mountain districts, there wrecking all that was beautiful in the lives of his people. The natural outcome would be a decadence and immorality, combined with a host of other troubles.

To defend his people, he allied himself with those who had a practical program: « Go out and meet the people. » The errors had to be refuted.

Although the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Leo XIII. was not yet published, its teachings already had been depicted and foreshadowed in the activities of good priests and laymen.

Don Guanella, together with Don Callisto Grandi and others, made early attempts at organizing Catholic social endeavors. We have already mentioned some of the work in the Chiavenna district. Now Don Guanella would leave his village to extend them. These Catholic organizations intended to bring together a form of mutual-aid societies which would meet the social welfare needs of the communities, — the first in Italy of Catholic inspirations.

A Little Book

Obviously, the people needed instruction and warning. The necessity of combating the erroneous ideas of the times was brought home to Don Guanella so strongly that he could no longer neglect another approach. So convinced was he of the power of the Catholic press that he thought to add a humble little effort to it by publishing a small book which he entitled: *An Essay of Friendly Advice for All, But Especially for Country Folk*. It was printed in 1872 by the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales of Turin and was included in the program of Catholic reading begun by Don Bosco in 1853 to provide good current literature.

To remove every fear that he was preaching any revolutionary doctrines in his book, he chose his words with care. Here we shall present a sample taken from the last chapter, written especially to the lads who had gone to war: « And when the wretched voices of the war make themselves heard, then more than ever, we beg you to remain devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: to Mary, His Mother: to St. Joseph. We, too, will not leave you until we are sure that you, safe and victorious, will be able to return in a short time to the embrace of your dear ones who now await you. And just as they will rejoice with gladness, so will we: just as they congra-

ulate you, so will we rejoice and greet you as champions of your religion and your country.

And we will lead you in triumph to the Church, where, once again, we will prostrate ourselves before the altars of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, who have snatched you from many dangers: and we will make the valls resound with a hymn of thanksgiving. Cheer up then, young men, I lift up my eyes and hands to heaven and bless you. In blessing you, I intend to bless your family and to pray for peace in the world. In the words of the Sovereign Pontiff: " God of Peace, You Who permit war so that we might find more sincerely toward the true and eternal peace in Heaven, God of Peace, give peace to the whole world. " »

Condemned

The small book of the priest who wanted « to populate Valtellina with priests and nuns » seemed a clarion call to those who waged another kind of war, one for liberalism, Masonry. The political authority of Sondrio called it « a spark in a powder keg. » In 1873 the book was banned. Moreover, its author was forbidden to teach.

Civil authority invoked the Suspect Law which had grown old but somehow applied here, and Don

Guanella was put under surveillance. As a consequence he no longer could have approval as pastor. He was also deprived of the financial benefits which this position enjoyed.

His name was on the black list. Why? Because certain government officials didn't like his little book. What were they condemning in the pages of his book? An effort to elevate morality, to combat the infiltration of socialism, to defend the simplicity of farm life recalling the farmer to the love of his land, to dissuade enrollment in subversive societies, to check unnecessary emigration and urbanization, and to restore the traditions of his mountain people. This was his « subversive » message.

Condemned

The small book of the priest who wanted « to regulate Vallée with priests and nuns » seemed a call to those who waged another kind of war, one for liberalism, Masonry. The political authority of Sondrio called it « a spark in a powder keg ». In 1873 the book was banned. Moreover, its author was forbidden to teach.

Civil authority invoked the suspect law which had grown old but somehow applied here, and Don

CHAPTER EIGHT

WITH DON BOSCO

Bishop Carsana came to the Diocese of Como in 1872. He was immediately faced with the religious destitution wrought by the loss of priest and pastors. Part of the lack of priests was due to their removal from their posts by political foes who used then-existing legal measures. Other priests were serving in military combat. Still worse, there was the scarcity of vocations. This in a diocese which had once flourished with excellent priests! Of the 519 parishes of the Diocese of Como, 192 were located in Swiss territory. Now many parishes were unable to have even one priest.

Vocational Recruiting in the 1870's

Bishop Carsana sent an immediate appeal to his priests and faithful with instructions and suggestions.

The particular aim would be to prepare and fortify children to become good soldiers of Christ in the present and future difficult times. His hope and prayer was that some youths would be inspired with the desire to become priests.

The atmosphere certainly, was not the kind to foster vocations. Don Guanella's pen had written:

« In a small book printed by the Carbonari and entitled: *The Roman Church in the Face of Revolution* are found diabolic and satanic charges. They say that the followers of Freemasonry must consecrate all their lives to the great work of affecting youth: they must enter into seminaries and pervert students, who thus become false prophets-priests who will influence people with corrupt doctrines.

The book continues to outline their activity in the immediate present: existing priests, particularly those in high positions, must be crushed by scorn and calumny so that Catholics no longer believe them. It concludes that after all of this, should there remain any Catholics in the country, these should be massacred together, as Diderot has already written: « The intestines of the last priest could be used to strangle the last king. »

Don Guanella wrote to his Bishop in response to his call to foster vocations. He already had four youngsters who showed excellent signs, but they were so poor that their parents could not pay even

initial expenses. How would their education be financed? The Bishop quickly replied that he would find a way to assist them and urged that they begin at once.

Here was an immediate chance for Don Guanella to aid a work which he dearly loved. He arranged to have the boys attend classes in his own house. Hardly had he begun when the authorities of the district ended his effort by reviving the « suspect » charge and former teacher-suspension.

« His Request

Finding himself in an impossible position in the town of Savogno, he thought that another local might relieve him from policing eyes. Therefore, he made a request for the position of pastor in the vacant parishes of either Caspano or Torre Santa Maria in Val Malenco.

The prescribed examinations were taken in due fashion and successfully passed, but the examiners found clever ways to change Don Guanella's request. He was « induced » to renounce Caspano where he knew the people could have chosen him since they still possessed the right of choosing their own pastor. They promised him, instead, Torre Santa Maria. In

the end however, they gave preference to another priest. The civil authority did not want Don Guanella to become a pastor at any cost. If they had allowed him to become pastor of Caspano, they would have run up against the delighted people who would thereby show their disregard for seeking civil authority's permission in such matters.

Don Guanella now found himself rejected by lay officials and even fellow clerics. The latter were critical because he seemed to get into one difficulty after another. Why couldn't he be more prudent in these times? He was laughingly referred to as the « tossed-about-curate. »

A Project

Don Guanella's father died in 1874 at 74 years of age. Don Guanella felt that he could never expect to become a pastor: and so, with his small inheritance and aided by benefactors and friends (he always had some friends who loved him and admired the sanctity of his life) he sought to open an institution. What kind of institution? For the poor? For the young? He thought that work with the young was needed, especially in view of the shortage of vocations.



Sister CHIARA BOSATTA



Sister MARCELLINA BOSATTA,
joint founder of the Daughters of Our
Lady of Providence.

He visited his Bishop and explained that he thought he might succeed with a work for young boys since Como had no such institute for poor young lads. Don Bosco had shown such efforts to be successful in Turin. The Bishop listened. The Bishop refused.

Don Guanella had yet another plan to substitute for the first. Might he go to live with Don Bosco for a short time? He could thus gain experience in the school of a master. Perhaps Don Bosco would be interested in starting a place in Como. If not, after this opportunity for first-hand experience, he would be in a better position to help in operating a similar institution in Como, if the Bishop thought it advisable. Would the Bishop consent to his going? The Bishop did consent.

Many Mansions

« One evening in January 1875, » Don Guanella relates, « I knelt to kiss the hand of Don Bosco who had just completed a conference with his superior council which decided to send an expedition to America. He greeted me with, " Shall we go to America? " »

The following day, he was told by Don Bosco to write letters for the opening of a College in Argen-

tina. One by one, he assumed the offices confided to him: later, he took over the direction of the Oratory of St. Aloysius attended by about seven hundred youths over which Don Michele Rua had presided. Don Bosco found Don Guanella to be an experienced and wise priest, and many times they discussed their common goals.

In October of the same year, Don Guanella was given charge of a new college in the town of Trinità di Mondovì. The Bishop of that diocese esteemed him and called upon him to preach in the seminaries.

On one occasion while Don Guanella was travelling with Don Bosco to visit some of his many houses, the conversation turned to ways of providing further help. Vocations to the priesthood were still insufficient among the young. « Perhaps it would be possible to seek some adult vocation, » suggested Don Guanella. This may have influenced Don Bosco later when he started his « Sons of Mary » destined to draw their members from adults. Don Guanella was made their first director.

For Three Years

Don Bosco had wished, we might say even ordered, that Don Guanella stay for a period of at least three years and take vows as a religious of the Con-

gregation in which he was living and working. He hoped Don Guanella would become a permanent member of his Congregation.

Don Guanella, on his part, recalled the needs of his diocese and the plan under which he had left. Now it looked as if Don Bosco would be able to start a school for boys in Mendrisio, then in the diocese of Como, but situated in Swiss territory. Their hopes fell through, however. According to the law, Swiss members were the only ones who could assume responsibility for its directions, and they had no Swiss members in their group.

There remained nothing for Don Guanella except the prospect of an effort to start an institution of his own. The Bishop had asked for his return. Would the Bishop really want an institute or would he have to return to Savogno and take up his place amid the endless restrictions of civil authorities?

« My Eternal Gratitude to Don Bosco »

The battle was strongly waged in the depths of his soul. Should he return to his diocese or should he continue working with Don Bosco and his co-workers in fields that he liked, with the possibility, even of foreign mission work?

Don Bosco realized his struggle, particularly great now that his threeyear period of vows was ending. He wrote to Don Guanella on the 2nd of June, 1878: « Do not worry, do not speak, do not write of anything until your three years have ended. During this time, speak only with Jesus Crucified and pray that He will make known to you what is His Will in your regard. » He then pleaded, using his benevolent authority, « My dear Don Luigi, help me save souls. Europe and America are calling for priests. Don't desert me in the battle: rather fight with all your strength, and you will secure a crown of glory. »

Again on the 13th of July, 1878: « The Holy Father has ordered me to send missionaries to San Domingo to take over the direction of a seminary, the Cathedral, and the University. Would not this be what you have always wanted? I believe this is, for you, a providential occasion. Do you wish Don Luigi, to be a part of this new expedition and mission? »

The struggle of heart and soul must end. The idea became clearer day by day. He finally gave his decision: he would return to his own diocese: he would be obedient to his Bishop.

The separation was sad. As he himself remarked, « I had not suffered as much when my parents died as I did when leaving Don Bosco. » During his whole

life, he remembered with nostalgia the time he spent with the Salesians.

« I had before me the example of so much virtue and the direction of Don Bosco, who did so much good to all. The heart of Don Bosco was a magnet which attracted all: and his words, so few and measured, gave light to the mind. My eternal gratitude to Don Bosco and his houses. »

As he thought, he presented himself to the Bishop for his new assignment. He was appointed curate at Trions in Valtellina where the pastor, for a long time, had been crippled by paralysis. The Bishop told Don Guanella: « Go up there, you will find houses and empty monasteries fit for those foundations you have in mind. Just make sure that you keep both feet on the ground and you will have my blessing. » These last words made the young priest feel that Providence was on his side. He went to Trions as coadjutor to the Pastor. At the same time, so he thought, he would lay a foundation for his desired institute.

Misery

The welcome from the pastor was anything but cordial. He was forced to use crutches and could not

CHAPTER NINE

THE FOUNDER WHO WAS A FAILURE

As he ought, he presented himself to the Bishop for his new assignment. He was appointed curate at Traona in Valtellina where the pastor, for a long time, had been crippled by paralysis. The Bishop told Don Guanella: « Go up there, you will find houses and empty monasteries fit for those foundations you have in mind. Just make sure that you keep both feet on the ground and you will have my blessing. » These last words made the young priest feel that Providence was on his side. He went to Traona as coadjutor to the Pastor. At the same time, so he thought, he would lay a foundation for his desired institute.

Misery

The welcome from the pastor was anything but cordial. He was forced to use crutches and could not

visit the sick: but his first words were: « I don't need any help. I'm on the road to recovery and I can go it alone. »

« If this is so, » said Don Guanella, « I can go back to my Superior who sent me. »

« No, » rejoined the pastor, « if the Bishop sent you, you'll stay. »

But the coadjutor was given no financial support from the pastor. He said it was the business of the Commune to pay salaries. The Commune, on its part, said they could give nothing to the coadjutor until the pastor was relieved of his duties.

Don Guanella took his case to the prefect of Sondrio who said it was not his business inasmuch as « the well-known priest Guanella » could not be in such poor financial straits since he always had enough money to publish « clerical propaganda. »

In fact, Don Guanella had just then published a booklet entitled *Let Us Go to the Father*, with the subtitle: « An Invitation to the Family to Recite the Our Father Well. » The occasion which inspired its publication had been the death of his dear mother. She had suffered a stroke one day when returning from Mass, and had lingered for two years. Her children lovingly cared for her. Don Luigi spent as much time as he could with her and had the consolation of having her die in his arms.

His small booklet was without offense to anyone: but his enemies, fearing a possible revival of literary activity, influenced the prefect of Sondrio, Breganze, to forbid Don Guanella to collect royalties on his book.

This was in November, 1880. Don Guanella at once had recourse to the Council of the State who eventually, December 7, 1882, recognized his right and gave him the sum of two hundred lire. It was not the money that interested him: rather was he buoyed up by the justice shown in the case.

Another Beginning

His special interest in children and youth, his talent for teaching and inspiring them, together with the further practical experience he had obtained in the work of Don Bosco made Don Luigi think that this was to be his life's work.

He was distressed that public measures were slow to get underway in attacking the terrible problem of illiteracy in Italy. He regretted to see youth without the formal education necessary to prepare them for the new problems of a dynamic future now looming in this modern age.

A Franciscan convent in the Traona vicinity, built by the Reformed Friars Minor in 1632, was

used, after the Law of Suppression had sent away its monks, as a barn. Don Guanella now thought to do a double work: restore the old building to a more fitting use and at the same time provide quarters for a program modeled on Don Bosco's oratory. He acquired it and at once set about renovating it into a small private school which he intended to be free. It would accommodate about a dozen boys, some of whom would stay there because of traveling distance.

Don Guanella had already been holding evening and Sunday classes on the elementary level for poor children, as well as teaching them catechism. Now he worked at making desks and other furniture with the joy of one who feels he can make difficult jobs easy.

A letter of approval arrived on the 10th of May, 1879, from his Chancery Office (the Curia) and he felt, at last, that he had come into his own field. This time he thought his small foundation was established solidly.

Letters of gratitude soon came from the parents of the boys who saw the fine progress being made, and Don Guanella realized he had acquired some of the most talented lads in the countryside. The school—select, free, private, ecclesiastic, though very, very small—could no longer be an annoyance to anyone, so he thought.

Immediate Closure

Instead, he was again to become « suspicious » in the political eyes who watched all the actions of Don Guanella. In this small school, there was the danger that he could truly populate Valtellina with monks and nuns. They recalled his *Essay of Friendly Advice*, which had placed a mark on its author's name, an indelible stamp of disapproval: this rendered everything he did worthy of censure.

In February, 1881, the school was closed by the order of the authorities. The pretext used: the little school, now in its second year of life, had begun without Don Guanella's seeking the necessary permission from delegated authorities. He was threatened with fines and punishment.

Unemployed

The « founder who failed » began to be the object of scorn, also of his confreres and even superiors. « Why did he fail? » they asked. « He must be imprudent. » « Why is he so obstinate in persisting in the idea of founding an institution? » He could stay quietly at his post, and hope, at least, for a place of his own. « He doesn't lack intelligence or virtue. »

No one doubted his good intentions, only his impractical use of ability and lack of foresight. There were those who advised that he should be transferred to some corner of the diocese where he could do no harm.

In the meantime, the pastor of Traona decided to retire: and Father Nicola Silvestri, a former classmate of Don Guanella's succeeded him. Don Silvestri esteemed Don Luigi highly: he knew intimately his aspirations and was aware of his gifts of mind and heart. They promised to help each other: Don Guanella would assist in the parish and Don Silvestri would back him in getting some form of institution established in the old Franciscan convent.

Instead, the authorities stepped in and ordered that Don Guanella leave Traona. He was without a post now. He accepted an invitation to preach daily during Lent in a parish at Morbegno. Two policemen were stationed at the foot of the pulpit during his entire stay to catch his every word. He then preached for the month of May in Milan, and the month of June at Santa Maria Alla Fontana.

A Stormy Talk

Most assiduous among his listeners was a lawyer, Giuseppe Brasca. He admired the simple yet strong

words of the young priest and wanted to help him. He knew of Don Guanella's troubles and promised to take his part against ex-prefect Breganze, a former school companion of his now head of the Cabinet of Deputies at Rome.

Brasca went to Rome. He sought to be a mediator and secured an appointment with the former prefect of Sondrio.

« I want to talk to you in behalf of Don Guanella, » he began. But as soon as Breganze heard the name, he turned away and refused to listen.

Brasca tried again, but to no avail. Again, a third time, but seeing it was impossible to argue, the lawyer shouted: « But when you come right down to it, what has this Guanella done? »

« He is anti-monarchist, unpatriotic, » rejoined Breganze. « He fills Valtellina with priests and nuns. »

« But what crime is there in that? » fought back the lawyer, glad at last to manage to get him talking about the faults and merits of the priest.

At the conclusion of this heated debate the head of the Cabinet guaranteed that Don Guanella would be left in peace but on one condition: that the Diocesan Curia of Como would assign him to some remote place where he could not exercise his dangerous influence.

The sentence was sealed.

Don Guanella, « the hot head against whom all must guard themselves, » left Traona amid great perturbation on the part of the good people of the town.

He went to Gravedona where he became temporary coadjutor to a relative who was archpriest.

CHAPTER TEN

IN CONFINEMENT

Both civil and ecclesiastical authorities were now in agreement about Don Guanella: He would be confined to a small parish. Olmo, overlooking the Spluga Pass, was selected because civil authorities thought he would be unable to exercise his influence here: and ecclesiastical authorities thought the solitude would cure him of his mania for getting into trouble over projects, which although good in themselves, were not successful.

His new parish was a mountain countryside which boasted only one church and a few poor homes. The dark night overtook him during his initial climb and the poor « failure » passed the night sleeping on top of a small stone wall. In the morning, he continued the long, hard climb to take over the care of the souls at Olmo and the neighboring parish of San Bernardo.

In profound peace found in a place only accessible to mountain climbers he was able to think

about the projects closest to his heart. The contrast between the dreams and hopes of his youth and the inertia on this crag was enough to make him weep, but he said nothing to anyone.

He gave himself to his parochial duties, kept up with his theological studies, and passed hour after hour in prayer and meditation. In his solitude, it was impossible for him to forget about his empty building at Traona. His mind was working again on new projects: « If they won't let me have a school, I'll open a home. This surely couldn't bother the Masons. » He had included always in his plans the hope of opening homes in imitation of St. Joseph Cottolengo, to gather the poor of Valtellina, the aged, the infirm, all whom the world called « useless. »

However, the civil authorities had succeeded in applying the law of « suspect » to him. Finally they extended its severity to the very point where they could order him « confined » to a definite local and where they succeeded in getting even ecclesiastical authority to send him to a place where further activity seemed to be impossible. The Bishop, who really loved and esteemed Don Guanella, regretted this turn of events very much. He feared for his poor priest confined at Olmo, the Don Guanella who was loved and followed by many, who was able to speak so forcefully, who knew how to write and organize.

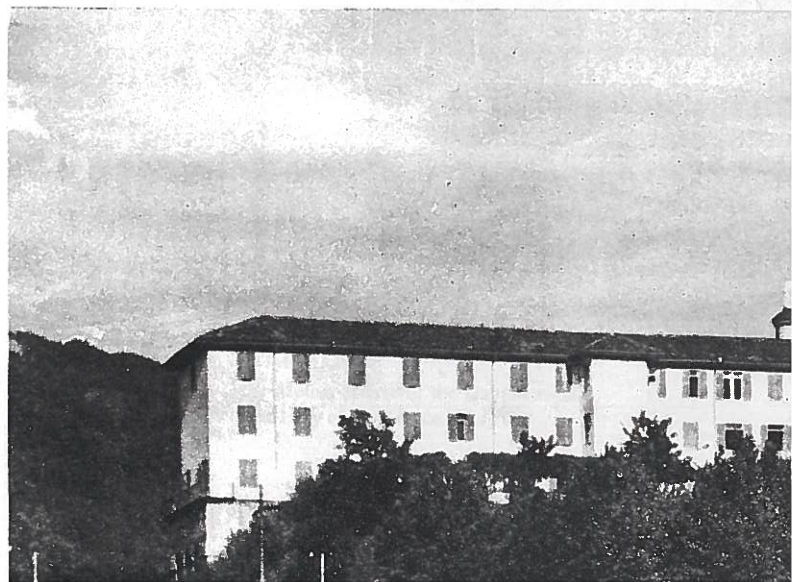
« And I Am Here »

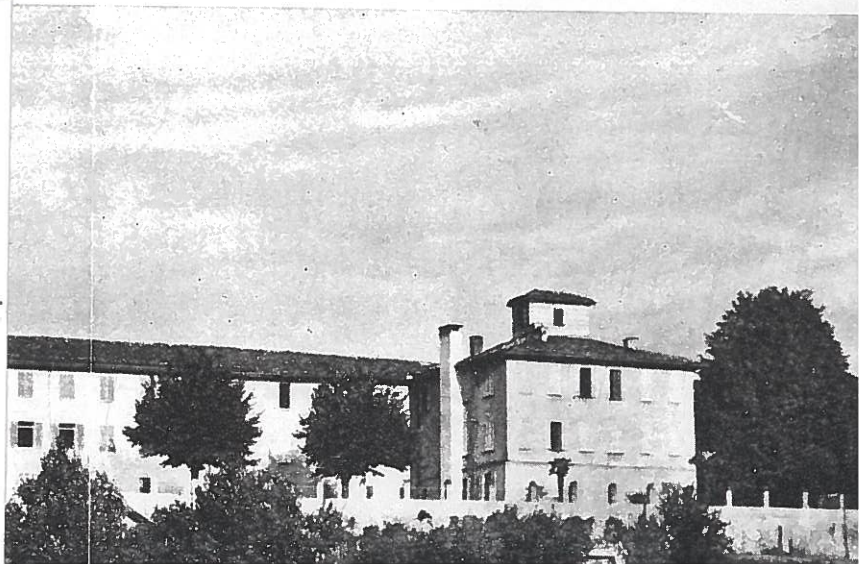
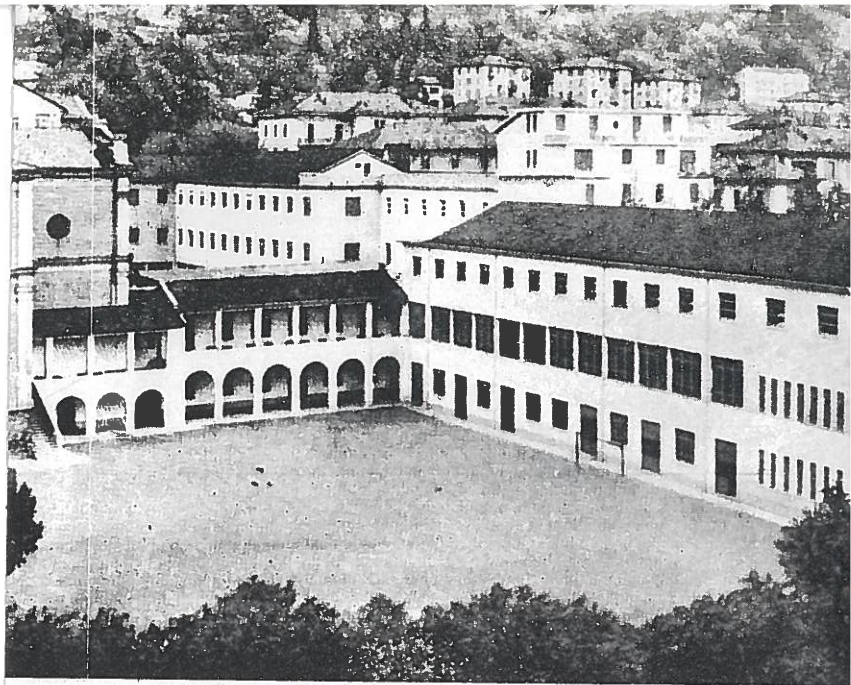
At Olmo, Don Guanella turned his anguished thoughts upon the train of events which had brought him there. Only in his faith did he find comfort. It was at this time, as he himself confessed later, « I would say to myself again and again: " My confreres, my students are all working for the glory of God and good of souls, near and far: and I am here. What am I doing? " »

There came to him an idea, inspired, no doubt, by the sadness which this saintly man who, beyond all others, had loved and understood him, there would be a place for him. He could say: « Only Don Bosco understood me. »

He sought the advice of Don Anglesio, the successor of St. Joseph Cottolengo, who advised him with a consoling letter. This decided him. He wrote a long letter on the 15th of September, 1881, to Don Bosco, asking to be readmitted into the Salesians.

The answer, signed by Giovanni Cagliero, came from Don Bosco on the 25th of September, 1881: « We have read your letter, and realize the good disposition which you have towards our Community, together with a great desire to return. Recalling the fine memory we have of you and your zeal for the glory of God, we have decided to grant your request,





but on two conditions: that you settle the affairs which up to now have tied you to your diocese in such a way that there will be no reason to call you back: and secondly, that you come prepared to submit yourself entirely to our obedience. »

Two days after Don Guanella had written his letter to Don Bosco, his friend Don Silvestri, of his own accord, decided to do something about Don Guanella's plight. He visited the Bishop, told him all he knew about his friend, and asked, if at all possible, to let him return to Traona as his assistant. If conditions went well, he asked that Don Luigi be allowed to begin a home of assistance for the poor in the former Franciscan convent. The Bishop wondered if Don Guanella had been behind this request but Don Silvestri assured His Excellency that it was not he that sent him. The Bishop said he would not permit anything like this at present, but hinted that he was considering the priest's situation.

Shortly, a letter came from the Bishop: Don Guanella should stay a while longer at Olmo, while he, the Bishop, would work finding another place for him.

More than ever, Don Guanella was in conflict. Again, the decision came: he would obey his Bishop.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

« THERE IS A HOME UP THERE »

« The first of July, 1881, » writes Don Guanella « while at Gravedona as coadjutor, like a knight knocked from his horse, still a little confused and bewildered, I heard of the death of Father Coppini, the pastor of Pianello Lario. I only knew of him in a vague way, but I knew that he had been well thought of and that he had founded a home for women and orphans. A sudden thought flashed into my mind—perhaps I could take his place. This thought grew and grew until it became so clear that I almost could hear it said: "Little by little, from there you will begin your work." »

Thus, the way of Divine Providence. The Bishop wrote that Don Guanella had been assigned as vicar to Pianello.

Settled Finally?

He accepted, but again laid forth his reason for not wishing to be permanently assigned. He still

hoped to found an institution which had always been foremost in his thoughts and hopes. The Bishop made it clear that it was for this reason he had been assigned to Pianello, that he might realize his hopes in the institutions which had already been started there. The parish would not take up all of his time and energy. With both assignments he could expect to be kept busy. The prospects were encouraging.

He arrived in Pianello on a November night, about 11 p. m. The old deaf housekeeper had retired long before and finally awakened to his banging with a stone on the door.

The next morning she asked him what he would like for his lunch. « Whatever you were used to preparing for Don Coppini » was the reply. At noon he went into the kitchen where there was not even a chair, and found cornbread and cheese.

Who Is This Curate?

Those old rumors about his failures and ineffectual start of many works were good gossip for the townspeople. The former zealous curate Don Coppini, also had had many persecutors who were ready to transfer their calumnies to the new priest. He was known to be a transient, imprudent to the

point where both civil and ecclesiastical authorities had to restrict his activities.

Naturally, the good folk of the town were bewildered and hesitant about approaching their new priest. In a little while, however, the good sense of the people led them to draw their own conclusions. They realized they had a Father who was generous in his charity, had a kind word for all, drew many to his school, assisted the sick, preached simply and frankly, and showed no fear of the liberal element in their midst.

Among His Flock

After his morning duties, Don Guanella would retire to his study where he could be found at his desk and chair made of boards supported by bamboo poles. He would read and write for an hour standing, then an hour sitting, and another on his knees.

In the afternoon he visited the sick of the parish, heard confessions and returned to his study. In the evening he went to the parish church where he conducted the rosary and services for his devout parishioners who esteemed him for his poverty and zeal.

Sundays began with his Masses and explanations of the Gospel. Later he had morning catechism classes for children and adults. For the more fervent



NUOVA OLONIO

S. Salvatore :

the institute for assistance of the « good
sons » in the aerea reclaimed by Don
Guanella.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
100 EAST 57TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
TEL. 733-4331

of his flock he offered a spiritual conference in the afternoon. Sunday evening brought back a larger portion of the parish for a brief service, and a tiny, fervent exhortation. Then festive activities followed which provided a pleasant get-together of his people.

His Predecessor

To better understand further events, let us take a backward glance at the work of his predecessor. This good priest, Don Carlo Coppini, had died in July, 1881, at the age of 54, overcome by years of ill health and the oppression of the spying enemies of the times.

As soon as he had become pastor, Don Coppini announced a Sunday afternoon elementary class for young girls of the parish. At first only a few came, but it was not long before all the girls enrolled. Their enthusiasm for study kept them up at night, even after a hard day's work: and mothers joined them, becoming their pupils in the quest for learning.

The prosperity of the school drew the wrath of the existing enemies of the church. They trumped up reasons for closing the school, and the mayor, using their silly pretexts, ordered that it be done.

The prudent Don Coppini relied on the good sense of his parishioners to solve the problem. The

young women organized a demonstration in front of the house of the mayor and demanded that he listen to their case. He came out and tried to end it by ridiculing them, but instead he found them capable of arguing their cause clearly. Though he insulted them by saying that those destined to work in the fields had no need of an education, he nevertheless had to withdraw his order. The school went on as usual.

A Pious Union

Among the young women of the parish were some who were eager to form a spiritual association. In 1865, Don Coppini brought them together into a group which he named The Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary. They chose St. Ursula and St. Angela Merici for saintly protectors. Marcellina Bosatta, a gifted, capable young lady, invited the girls to her home on Sundays where they enjoyed meetings which included prayer and singing. A few of these girls confided to Don Coppini that they felt called to the religious life in which they could consecrate all of their activity to God.

« Wait a little longer, » was his answer: « I have an idea about this very possibility. » His thoughts had been turning to the poor who stood in need

of domiciliary care. Finally he proposed opening a little orphanage for girls. Two rooms were secured at nearby Camlago: one would be a kitchen and living room, the other could accomodate three beds.

On October 18, 1872, Marcellina Bosatta and Maddalena Minatta with two orphans (later two more) took up residence in the tiny quarters. They wrote thus about it: « Today began the work dear to our hearts. »

A Small Home

Soon they needed more space, and six more beds were provided in a new room. Now they were faced with another aspect of the work: two old men needed a home, one the father of one of the Sisters. These, also were taken under care and thus began the resthome for aged and invalids.

A few more girls offered their services. This led Father Coppini to help these generous hearts arrange a little rule of life, and they were permitted to don a religious dress. The ceremony of religious clothing took place June 28, 1878, the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Four members received the habit which consisted of a simple dress, cape and bonnet. Their first superior was Sister Marcellina Bosatta and they

called themselves « Ursulines. » In 1880, the Bishop approved their Rule on a temporary basis.

Don Coppini felt death approaching in 1881 and the little group of Sisters were heartbroken at the thought of losing him and his direction. He called them together to console them and made a prophetic statement. In brief he said: « Always accept the Will of God. After me will come another who will do much more than I have done. »

« Another Will Come »

After the death of Don Coppini, various priests advised the four nuns to return to their homes. They were ready to make sacrifices, but this was not what they anticipated. They clung together with the reminder of Don Coppini's words: « After me will come one who will do more than I. »

Who was this to be?

When Don Guanella was sent to Pianellà, Sister Marcellina was warned by many to be on her guard against this « hot-headed » priest. She and the little community kept a prudent reserve. The administration of the institute had been given to the local dean of priest who did not reside in the town and who thus worked from a distance. The financial affairs of

the institute took a bad turn. Buildings needed repair and improvement. No order was given to Don Guanella to enter into the program of the Institute. His work was to be with the parish. One day the Director invited him to visit the Institution. This was the first opportunity given to the superior to become acquainted with him. She was surprised to find him even on this first acquaintance, quite different than rumor pictured him. His words were well chosen, his judgement sound, his bearing dignified. Surely, she had been misinformed! Still time must prove the truth.

After some time, she plucked up courage and asked a favor of him: would it be possible for Don Guanella to give them spiritual conferences? Don Guanella consented.

For another year, this brief contact continued with Don Guanella giving them a conference now and then. The Sisters appreciated his fervent words and felt that their first impression had been right: he was not what rumor pictured him to be.

The affairs of the institute were reaching the crisis point. The Sisters realized that they could not go on much longer. The priest who had been appointed as director lost all interest in the work as the obstacles increased. He reported the situation hopeless to the diocesan authorities. He further recommended that the institute be closed and the

Sisterhood disbanded, inasmuch as it was yet only temporarily approved.

For approximately four years Don Guanella had had to stand by and watch the work slipping into ruin, but he had no expressed invitation to join the local clerical authorities directing it. Meanwhile, he was reassuring a number of young women who wished to become Sisters at the institute that somehow or other soon there would be a place for them. His parish, too, had need of teachers: and more needy persons clamored for entrance. He desired to build a Chapel for the Sisters and their residents. He wrote to the vicar general for approbation, but this was not given.

At this juncture, Don Guanella took the matter to the Bishop who, after listening, advised him to write a detailed description of conditions and suggest plans for salvaging the work.

The long letter written at this time permits us to realize a little of what his great heart desired for the needy, how he had felt when he was so close to a work which he loved, yet unable to enter into it. The years were slipping by and now at forty-three years of age he still felt he had not begun his life's work. Still he was ready to be obedient to his superiors at any cost. If, however, they deemed him worthy to undertake the affairs of the home, he would contribute not only his energy but his patri-

mony together with the price of his little property at Traona.

He wrote all of this on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1885. He prayed to this Saint, to whom he was particularly devoted, to aid his cause. If the reply was favorable, he would place his efforts in the saint's care. « He will take the reins and surely we can succeed, » thought Don Guanella as he sealed the letter.

The first four years at Pissello had permitted him to engage in literary activity — so much so that he had published approximately fifty little books and pamphlets without too much difficulty from the civil censors. They comprised a series entitled « The Informed Catholic ». He expressed their purpose as follows: « I am presenting a collection of small works to help the average Catholic to attain a better understanding of the Gospel and Christian Doctrine. Priests, also, may find the material helpful in preparing instructions for the recurring feasts and holy seasons of the Church. »

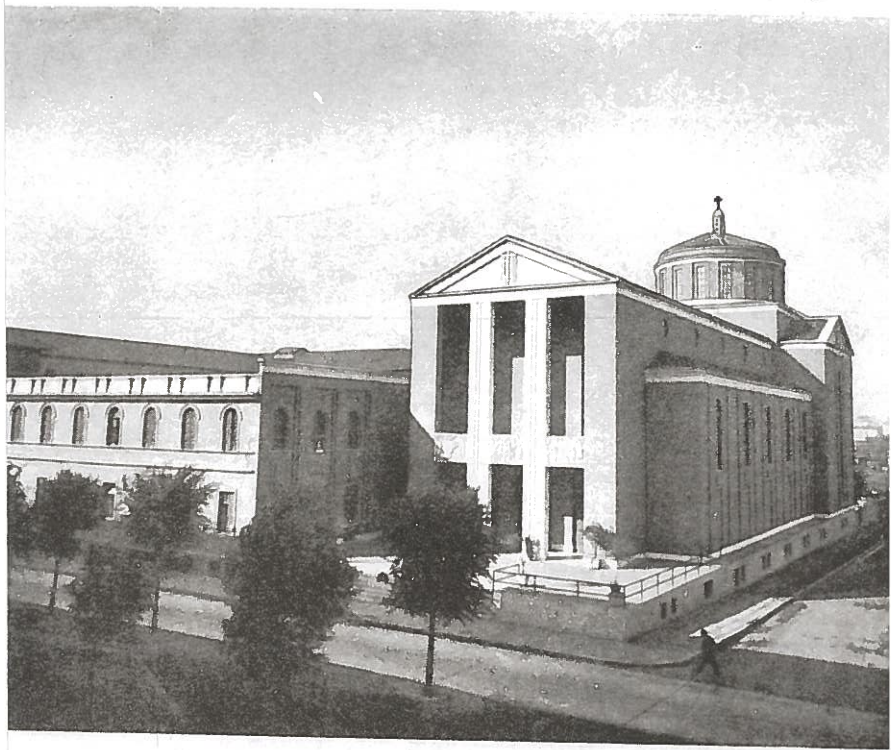
He lived among the mountain people and wrote expressly for them in their language, using illustrative incidents that appealed, answering difficulties which they encountered. Above all, he strove to inculcate virtue and increase devotion. He wished to

CHAPTER TWELVE

NEW TRIALS

The first four years at Pianello had permitted him to engage in literary activity — so much so that he had published approximately fifty little books and pamphlets without too much difficulty from the civil censors. They comprised a series entitled « The Informed Catholic ». He expressed their purpose as follows: « I am presenting a collection of small works to help the average Catholic to attain a better understanding of the Gospel and Christian Doctrine. Priests, also, may find the material helpful in preparing instructions for the recurring feasts and holy seasons of the Church. »

He lived among the mountain people and wrote expressly for them in their language, using illustrative incidents that appealed, answering difficulties which they encountered. Above all, he strove to inculcate virtue and increase devotion. He wished to



MILAN :
Church and Institute S. Gaetano.

preserve all that was beautiful and good in their customs, but at the same time he awakened their minds to accept the inevitable scientific and educational changes which were taking place for the common good.

On the one hand, his little works included ascetic and moral guides with titles indicating their content: « *Our Lady of Lourdes, Thoughts for the Month of May, For Lent.* » There were conference for priest, sisters, children and for organizations such as the Children of Mary: maxims of St. Theresa of Avila: the life of St. Francis with an explanation of the Third Order and stories of the good it accomplished: and many more. In another category were little biographies of good persons who had but recently lived in their own neighborhood, short lives of sisters, priest, laymen and women, even children, designed to illustrate how well they used the gifts of faith and their special talents to draw closer to God.

His works were described by reviewers as being Christ-centered: « small but filled with saintly geniality and with an idea and purpose in every line. »

He had a special interest in bible and church history. He presented episodes for his mountain people, who were now attaining proficiency in reading and were eager for learning. The stories were

selected to interest them as well as to teach the valuable lessons of history in the light of the disturbed social times through which they were passing.

Especially did his pen defend the papacy and ecclesiastical authority. The problems of emigration and urbanization were frequently discussed because mountaineers were feverishly leaving their obscurity to begin life in an environment often detrimental to their faith and families.

With the breaking of family ties, we can understand why the numbers of neglected youth, abandoned aged, and chronically ill persons increased in both the rural and city areas. The times definitely called for Christian social action.

A Larger Vista

The Bishop answered the St. Joseph Day letter with full approval to all of Don Guanella's plans. He was to be spiritual director and administrator of the Institute.

« The Sisters by this time were convinced that he was « the other » of whom Don Coppini had spoken. Their complete confidence had been won when he gave them a retreat, (a guided course of spiritual exercises) in their hour of crisis. « Abandonment to

the Will of God, » « Trust in Providence » were his springboards into any host of difficulties.

In the small village of Camlago, there proved to be neither room nor opportunity for the institution to spread. A generous woman had donated a small house in another locality of Pianello. The Institute also possessed the homestead of Sister Marcelina Bosatta whose brother built a three story addition to it. Despite the scatter of the buildings and their location, all pointed to the fact that another page was being written in the history of voluntary giving to charity.

It had begun with a house for orphans in 1872: and now in 1885 there was a workshop and home, a hospital for the aged and sick, school classes for children. The Sisters also went into the homes of the people in the district to nurse the sick.

Expansion

This was the variety of work to which Don Guanella gladly set his hand. His first desire was to see it spread so that not only his parish but all the parishes in the district might benefit.

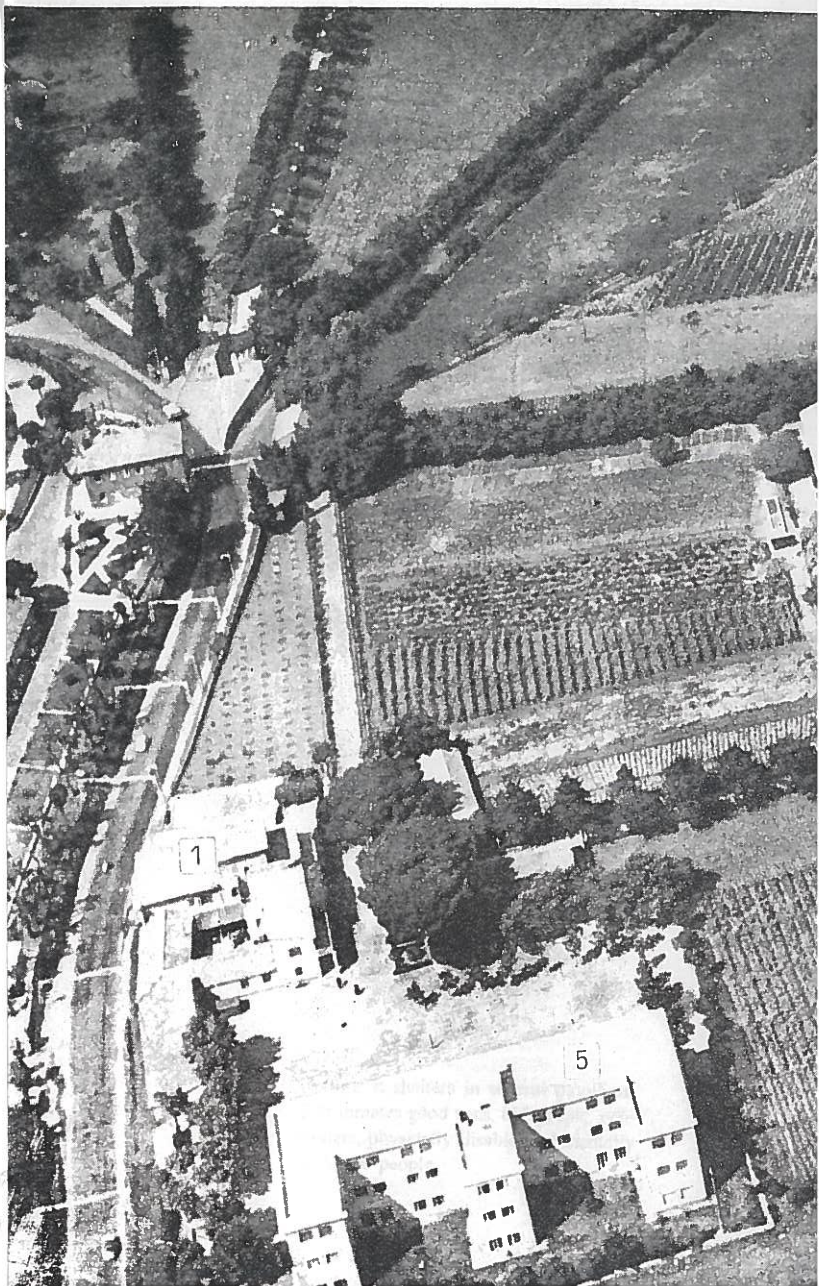
The first call came from Ardenno where his priest-brother, Don Lorenzo was located. Three of

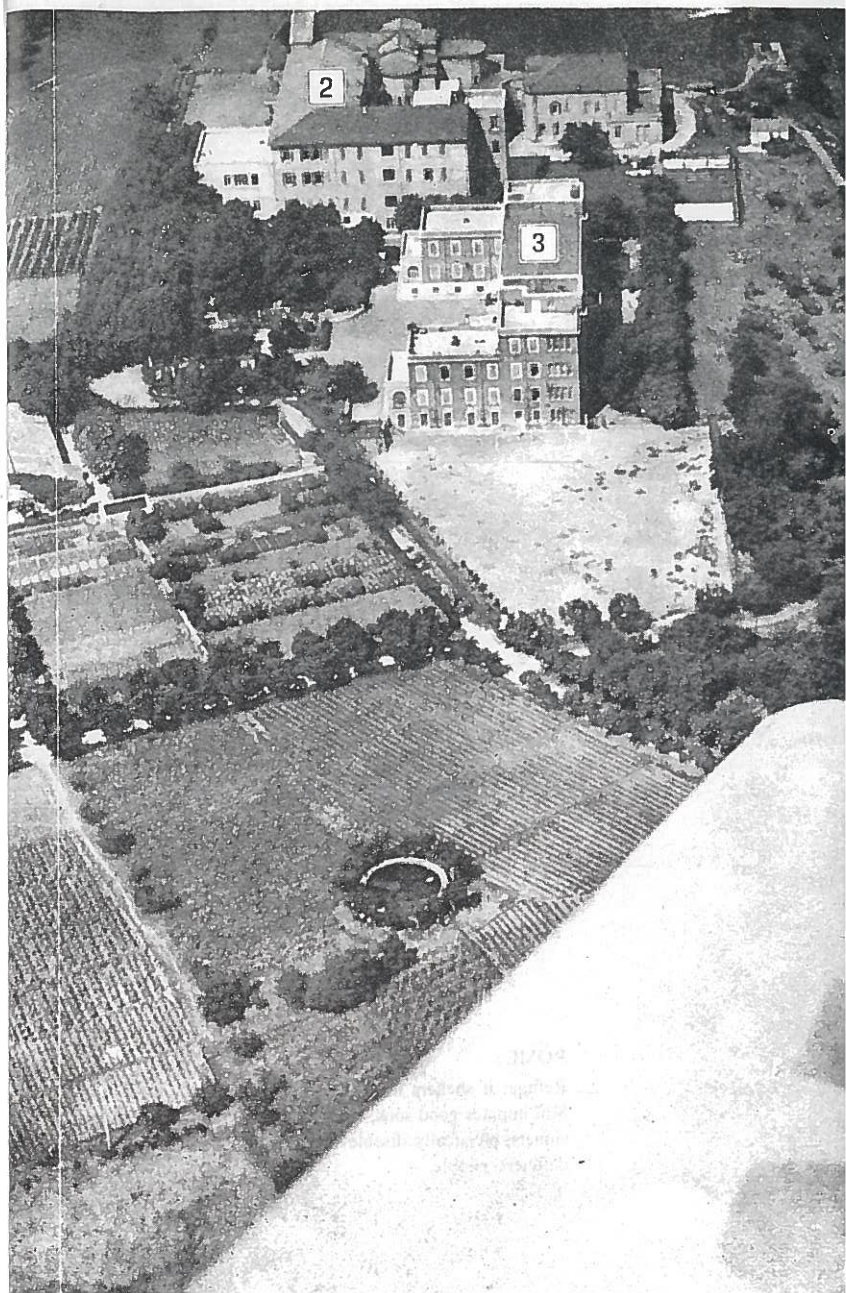
the Sisters joyfully set out to begin religious instruction classes for the poor children of the town and an elementar school for girls. They offered to take care of the church linen and served in many other little capacities.

Willing to bear any sacrifice, they did not complain of the scarcity of food. Their life was extremely hard. Yet they would have continued to bear privations if only they could have been told clearly what they were to do and permitted to do it without continual interruption of the pastor and his sister-housekeeper. Don Guanella realized their situation after a while, and advised his brother to permit them more autonomy and provide for their maintenance. When Don Lorenzo refused, Don Luigi recalled them to Pianello.

« Do Not Imitate Him »

The tension which had begun in his family with the donation of his patrimony to the institute increased with this incident. His brother Antonio once said of the younger priest: « I have two priest-brothers: one Don Lorenzo, who has brought honor to his family: The other Don Luigi, who has wasted his money and no longer remembers his family. » He added the advice: « Do not imitate him. »





A Small place at Como

Carping criticism again: « He already had two beginnings, one at Traona, the other at Ardenno. What is this we hear about his starting a center in Como? »

Don Guanella had been thinking of transferring the headquarters of the work to Como where he could provide services for the whole diocese. Pianello was to continue to have Sisters in the variety of works already in progress.

If the work was to continue, it would be necessary to form an institute for priest and brothers, too. The Sisters were urged to keep this intention uppermost in their prayers.

« Put Him in His Place »

His following of benefactors and friends had grown, and they were willing to assist in a new enterprise at Como.

Again, gossip went before him. The reaction was serious: The Suspect Law was threatening to include Don Guanella again, and this time his little religious congregation was also to come under the Act of Suppression. Unsuccessful in an attack on the person of Guanella, the hostility of the authorities turned

against the institute. The more rabid went to Dongo's prefect with various accusations, all more or less serious.

To defend his own priestly calling and the life of the institute, Don Guanella appeared before the prefect: he was prepared for the usual invectives.

Instead, in a conversational manner, the official using a most courteous tone, asked: « What do you plan to do at Como? »

Don Guanella was taken aback by the reception but let a tumult of words come: « I want to bring my work from Pianello to Como. I want to gather the orphans, the aged, the invalids, the deaf, epileptics, mentally deficient crippled, blind, all who are in danger of being treated as cast offs in society. The sisters who are destined to do this work will be selected from among the young girls who come to help the handicapped: they will be prepared, also, to nurse the sick in their homes. »

« You are interested then, in servant girls, » interrupted the prefect.

« Yes, » replied the priest, conscious of the humility of their lives of service. « I desire to train good servants. » The conversation turned to a discussion of the hazards involved when girls of good country folk go into the big cities to work. If given an opportunity, they could render great assistance in special programs.

The prefect grew enthusiastic to the point of ending the talk with « I like the idea. I'll get in touch with the Bishop and the City Council. Come, come quickly to Como to begin your work. »

Shortly afterward Don Guanella heard from the Bishop. « Welcome to Como, we want you and your work. »

What report had been sent to the prefect? Don Guanella never knew. He only marveled at the ways of Divine Providence which had given the graces for which he had been praying for so long a time.

After a night's travel, the little group reached Como and entered the few rented rooms which were to constitute their home until a better dwelling could be acquired. This was hard to find, but finally a place on Via Tommaso Grossi was located and secured with a six-month rental fee. When he went to pay the second half-year rental, he told the owner that he would pay this on condition that he could buy the place after six months. The price agreed upon was fourteen thousand lire.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE FOUNDATION OF A WORK

On an evening in April, 1866, a little boat came down from Pianello to Como, laden with a few bits of furniture which Don Guanella liked to describe as « square table missing one leg, a chair that had seen better days, a bed that was a miracle of balance! » The little boat had some passengers, two Sisters and four orphans at whose departure an old priest was heard to say: « There goes the swarm from the hive! »

After a night's travel, the little group reached Como and entered the few rented rooms which were to constitute their home until a better dwelling could be acquired. This was hard to find, but finally a place on Via Tommaso Grossi was located and secured with a six-month rental fee. When he went to pay the second half-year rental, he told the owner that he would pay this on condition that he could buy the place after six months. The price agreed upon was fourteen thousand lire.

Mistrust and Generosity

He had been promised this amount as a loan from a lady at Dongo. The night before his intended purchase, he called upon the lady to get the money. She retracted her promise giving the reason that she had heard he was not trustworthy in business matters.

He was stunned. Where was he to turn?

More surprised was he though when a Mr. and Mrs. Bernardo Calvi of Dongo presented themselves at his door saying: « We have brought you money simply because we know you need it. »

Another manifestation of Divine Providence! The Calvi family had brought exactly fifteen thousand lire as a donation.

That evening when closing the final negotiations for the building Don Guanella managed to get the surrounding property for another fifteen thousand lire. Thus Providence saw to it that the institute would have a good start.

At first the institute took the name of « The Little House of Providence » in imitation of St. Joseph Cottolengo, but in 1897 the adjective was dropped to avoid confusion.

In 1890 the house had two hundred persons in two sections: one for men, the other for women.

Don Guanella had gathered the aged, infirm, multiple handicapped — those whom he called his best friends.

Pope Leo XIII's Blessing

During a Pilgrimage to Rome, he was able to speak to His Holiness about his institute. He offered its works and prayers for the great Pope's intentions. Pope Leo then imparted his Apostolic Blessing to the benefactors Sisters, and residents. This blessing gave much joy to Don Guanella who said he was ready now for further responsibilities and difficulties which could be borne easily with the knowledge that he had the blessing of the Vicar of Christ.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE WORK GROWS

After the death of Bishop Carsana, the Diocese of Como entered upon another troubled period. The civil authorities refused to recognize his appointment. He died two years later without ever having been able to take possession of his see. Another four years went by and then Andrea Ferrari was appointed Bishop. Both his personal holiness and goodness were wellknown and the people eagerly awaited his arrival. Don Guanella wrote to Bishop Ferrari to offer his filial homage and received the reply: « From the depths of my heart, I offer you all my aid, for whatever help it may be to you. »

The First Visit

When Bishop Ferrari took residence in Como, he was pressured by several groups to force Don Guanella to close the Institute. A certain member of the

Commune alleged that the place might fail and then the whole burden of support of so many poor folk would fail upon the city and church officials.

Bishop Ferrari wished to see personally this controversial work before making a judgement. On the way, he discussed the purpose of the visit with his secretary.

« Your Excellency » commented the priest, « Although I do not want to infringe upon your authority, I would like to see Don Guanella given complete freedom of action. His intentions are of the best, his zeal outstanding, and he possesses a blind faith in Divine Providence. »

Already then, in this first visit, the Bishop and Don Guanella understood each other: and a friendship began which was to last always.

One zealot, who arrived a little late, tried to warn the Bishop to moderate Don Guanella's activities. « Pray for him, » answered the Bishop « and then go and visit his institute where you will see things run, not according to human prudence, but in accord with the Divine. »

« Stop »

One act of Bishop Ferrari's kindness should be especially noted. Don Guanella had decided to build a large church in place of the small chapel which

was now much too cramped. He invited the Bishop to view the need personally and advise on future construction.

« A new church for patients? » said the Bishop in a tone meant to hide his true feelings. « No, » he said, « We'll build a church not only for the patients but for the public as well! You can build it right between the section now occupied by men and the one for women, Measure the distance beginning from the street and keep going until I tell you to stop. »

Don Guanella started and kept going until he had gone far beyond the place he originally had measured when the Bishop said, « Stop. »

The church, dedicated to the Sacred Heart, was erected quickly. Don Guanella along with patients of every condition and age helped the workers with feverish activity.

« Let us work, » he said laughing, « let us work, my friends: the work will win us heaven. Let us prepare a home for the Sacred Heart which will be a font of blessings for us. » On April 6, 1893, Bishop Ferrari consecrated the new church which became at once a focal point of religious fervor.

Many pilgrimages to the new shrine now began. Don Guanella preached to some of the pilgrims, telling of incidents which occurred in the place, in the

hope of enkindling their love of God and Holy Mother Church.

One needy inmate, mentally disturbed and dissatisfied, threw down a statue of the Blessed Virgin which stood in the courtyard of the house. Don Luigi rushed to restore it to its place of honor, and then rang the bell to summon the household to make a prayer of reparation before the opened tabernacle. In telling of this, he drew a comparison with Holy Mother Church, persecuted and outraged by enemies and so often undefended by her own children. The vehemence of his words penetrated the rapt silence of his listeners bringing tears to the eyes of many.

Graces

Don Guanella placed the shield of Pope Innocent XI. over the door of this Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart, not so much to honor the pope whose place of origin was Como, but to remind all that this pope was intrepid in defending the Church from the insidious doctrines of Jansen and its unhappy effects upon her children.

During the course of construction when many of the inmates were happily engaged in assisting in the carrying of rocks and cement, Don Guanella called

a halt in the operation because the platforms were filled: he ordered all the people to leave. Suddenly the scaffolding under which many of them had been working crashed to the ground. The first to acknowledge graces received from the Sacred Heart was Don Guanella himself.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE DAUGHTERS OF ST. MARY OF PROVIDENCE

When he opened the House of Divine Providence at Como, Don Guanella entrusted the women's section to the Sisters and gave them for their own use a small building. This soon became too crowded. They moved then to a larger one near the church. The Sisters had attained a tremendous spirit of sacrifice. Eager to see the work for the poor go forward, they wished nothing for themselves personally. As one recalls a day's menu: « breakfast, a piece of dry bread; lunch, a little spaghetti and a lot of soy; supper, some limp salad with a bit of vinegar, a bowl of soup comprised »

To the three vows of religion — poverty, chastity, and obedience — a fourth could be added in those days, that of taking care of the contagiously diseased, renewable each year and was taken only

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE DAUGHTERS OF ST. MARY OF PROVIDENCE

When he opened the House of Divine Providence at Como, Don Guanella entrusted the women's section to the Sisters and gave them for their own use a small building. This soon became too crowded. They moved then to a larger one near the church.

The Sisters had attained a tremendous spirit of sacrifice. Eager to see the work for the poor go forward, they wished nothing for themselves personally. As one recalls a day's menu: « breakfast, a piece of dry bread: lunch, a little spaghetti and a lot of joy: supper, come limp salad with a bit of vinegar, a bowl of soup cornbread. »

To the three vows of religion — poverty, chastity, and obedience — a fourth could be added in those days, that of taking care of the contagiously diseased, renewable each year and was taken only

with the permission and at the discretion of the superior.

The first victim of the privations was Sister Clara Bosatta, not yet thirty years old, a sister of the foundress. Don Guanella wrote a little biography of this hidden soul. Over a short span of time, some seventy sisters succumbed in their field of labor. These willing 'martyrs of charity' drew many followers despite the fact that theirs was known to be a hard life.

Don Guanella called his Sisters « The overworked » (strapazzone) to encourage them to spare no fatigue or effort in caring for the sick entrusted to them. « When you find yourselves destitute, God will raise you up. Do not be frightened at the difficulties of life, of sickness, of death. Make yourselves victims for God and for the work of God. Thus your congregation, non matter how small, will be blessed by God. »

His favorite exhortations were: « Be happy and you will win Paradise. » Give all to win Heaven. » To encourage them to pray always, he would say: « You must be sacks of *Pater Nosters*. »

To the novices, he would advise: « At first you must be willing to learn to be hidden away in prayer and concealment: and once novices have become Sisters, you must do good to all.

Both in his conferences and in his writing, Don Guanella sought to raise his daughters to the heights

of Christian heroism. Theirs was to be a life of sacrifice and self-immolation, so that with this generosity ingrained, no difficulty would be insurmountable.

It was not long before the convent again became too crowded. A large plant, both a motherhouse and a place to expand their work, was needed. It was now that they took their official name: Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

Santa Maria at Lora

In 1894, Bishop Ferrari received the honor of being made Cardinal Archbishop of Milan. Como's diocese was given to Bishop Teodor dei Conti Valfré, a Piedmontese. He knew nothing of Don Guanella and had to judge from contradictory reports. There were those who praised his virtue and charity, and others who accused him of great waste in these difficult times of great want.

Meanwhile, the needs of the Sisters called for expansion a fine prospect was at hand for acquiring another site. On a hill in the outskirts of Como stood a large building with several smaller ones which had first been a silk factory, then a button factory. Now the property awaited a buyer, and several groups were contending for it. The municipality of Como wished it for a contagious hospital, others for a

hospital for the mentally ill. The Bishop thought it a fine place for a summer home for priests. No, one, however, had entered into negotiations for its purchase.

Bishop Valfré now received Don Guanella's request for the buildings. He recommended prudence and wanted to be advised of the condition of finances. One of Don Guanella's assistants brought the report. To him the Bishop said: « Do whatever you want: you can't argue with a saint! »

Don Guanella managed to purchase the property for forty-five thousand lire, three thousand down payment with the balance borrowed on a long-time loan which he hoped to repay from offerings of benefactors.

Remembering this episode, the Bishop used to tell of another one: « I had advised Don Guanella not to open more houses. One day he came to me and said:

"Your Excellency, I've contracted another debt: I bought a house at Binda. Providence will take care of us!" I didn't know what to say. A short time later, he came to see me again and said,

"Your Excellency, I've got another house in the small village of Menaggio. It was given to us along with a gift of forty thousand, possibly fifty thousand lire."

"To pay for the house at Binda!" I replied.

I had to remark further: "Go and do whatever you want, Don Luigi, because Providence is on your side and you are a man of Providence!" »

About this time someone started a silly rumor that Don Guanella had imposed a « tax » upon forty families in an effort to solicit funds. Unfortunately some, who should have known better taunted him about this. « Just another one of those little crosses, » he said.

St. Mary of Providence Chapel

The new building took the name of « Santa Maria. » One of the large rooms became the Chapel: words at its entrance called it: « Our Paradise on Earth. » The old buildings were renovated as far as possible for a house for the Sisters, a small hospital, and church. The former quarters in Como were adapted exclusively for men patients.

The reigning Pope, Leo XIII., was devoted to Our Lady of Providence, and his example gave impetus to this three-hundred-year-old devotion. Don Guanella contacted the Barnabite Fathers, who were instrumental in spreading this, and arranged for the Confraternity's establishment in the Chapel at Santa Maria depending on the Archconfraternity at Rome. Also, he had a beautiful painting of Our Lady of



ROME :

Refuge: a group of « good sons » busy
at their studies.

Providence installed. Every convent of the Sisters from that time on has had the benefits and privileges of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Providence.

Approbation of the Rule

The constitutions of the new order were presented to the Congregation of Religious in Rome and approved for a trial period of seven years. They were definitely approved on May 20, 1917. In this final draft are included the Rules and Sactions under which the Daughters live.

The habit of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence consists of a black dress with cape and bonnet. A crucifix containing relics of saints is suspended on a cord about the neck of the religious at the moment she pronounces her first vows. In church and when traveling, the Sisters wear a closely woven veil.

The aim of the Daughters as expressed in the Rule is to seek their own sanctification and that of other souls, particularly three classes of people: First, orphaned, neglected girls are to be educated and trained for work according to their capacity. Second, mentally and physically handicapped girls and women are cared for with the goal of rehabilitating them as their capacity and handicap permits. The third category included adult women who are inca-

pacitated by old age or chronic illness. At the requests of the Bishop of the diocese, the Daughters may collaborate in the work for boys and men.

In Appreciation of Scientific Advances

The hundredth anniversary of Alexander Volta's great discovery was to be celebrated in 1899. In 1898 Don Guanella suggested, « What more opportune time could we find to render a perpetual expression of gratitude and affection for a worthy scientist in the erection of a monument which would acknowledge Volta's inventive genius as well as his religious inclination? We propose to erect an electric beacon on the hill of Lora, between his birthplace and tomb, on the grounds is Santa Maria. » Its light will reach out both to Italy and Switzerland, signifying international benefits.

He undertook the printing and distribution of some twenty-five thousand leaflets with the illustrious scientist's picture. He also distributed the popular biography of Volta *Science and Faith*. He was instrumental in initiating a periodical, *For the Beacon*, which would make known the life, work and thought of the scientist.

The World Congress of Telegraphers which met in convention in Como in 1899 gave him an excel-

lent opportunity to promote his ideas. About three hundred people accepted his invitation to visit Santa Maria, see the proposed site, and take part in plans. The group expressed warm approval, and it was heartening to know that those from France, England and Germany were particularly interested.

Don Guanella wrote letters to scientists throughout the world, including Edison and Marconi.

Light and power was assured with the erection of a dynamo. A local scientist supervised the project, material support was obtained, yet the project in the end could not be realized. It was a fine idea. Its religious character, however, was fatal to its success. The divorce between science and religion in the new philosophy could be seen in this. Don Guanella wrote: « It is said that wherever liberalism touches, another fire is started. »

The First Vocations

A young soldier, at the close of his military service, came to the institute at Como. He had known

CHAPTER SIXTEEN THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

« Help me to form good priest. » These words were addressed to the Sisters as far back as the early days of reorganization of the little house in Pianello where it was foreseen that the work, if it was to spread would need priests.

« The art of making a good priest is a divine art. We must realize he is "another Christ." To prepare him for his great mission requires tremendous work, time, expense, » are the words of Father Guanella.

Don Guanella's idea was to form a congregation of priest, although this would mean a work of many years. It was to begin almost spontaneously with a few young men and boys who expressed a strong desire to aid him in his apostolate of charity. He called the Congregation Servants of Charity.

The First Vocations

A young soldier, at the close of his military service, came to the institute at Como. He had known

Don Guanella in Pianello. The Sister, upon opening the door, thought Giovanni Calvi had come as a casual visitor and wished him to take some refreshment. He refused smilingly, saying he had but one purpose in mind. He wanted to see Don Guanella, to ask his advice about leaving the farm in the hope that he might begin his studies for the priesthood. Don Guanella treated him as a son and he became one of the first priests.

A pastor presented two young boys to Don Guanella: « They want to be priests and belong to your group, if you but accept them. They are poor, apprentice carpenters, of good character, and studious. Let them study with you. »

In 1895, Cardinal Ferrari ordained the first priest for the House of Divine Providence. He was a young man from the Diocese of Milan, intelligent and virtuous, but whose handicap, epilepsy, required special permission for ordination. He had found a father in Don Guanella who pleaded his cause. The young priest's life, though short, was a marvel of charity.

« To overcome every difficulty or die, » this was the clarion call of that first small group.

« Some of our first priests, » recalled Don Guanella, « became sick because of early privations and excessive work and died the slow death of martyrs

of patience, performing their duties, despite their failing health. »

Among these early vocations, the name of young Alessandrino Mazzucchi stands forth.

One day, having given a talk on the priesthood, Don Guanella looked at his young audience and removing his biretta, placed it on little Alessandro's head. « Do you like that? Would you like to be a priest? » he asked.

Alessandro could hardly wait to get home to tell his mother. « The pastor put his biretta on me and said he would like me to be a priest. If I could only be one! »

A short time later, his mother, surprised to see the little lad on his knees before a tiny altar, heard him say: « Make me good so I can be all Yours ».

Now this small cleric, an example of devotion to the Eucharist, followed Don Guanella to Como. In him Don Guanella placed great hopes for the future.

One day while playing with the children in the yard, he was hit by a swing and killed instantly. Don Guanella saw in him a model destined to aid boys and men to become good members of his new Congregation. He wrote an inspiring biography of the young seminarian.

The Vows

On the evening of March 28, 1908, in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart, Don Guanella together with his first collaborators, pronounced simple perpetual religious vows, according to the wishes of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The Canonical approbation of their congregation would come in 1928, and that of their Constitution in 1935.

The scope of the congregation is: « The exercise of Christian charity in institutions, hospitals and homes, and assisting the more needy both in temporal and spiritual needs, especially with schools and religious instruction. Their wards are to be separated, depending upon the classification of age and need, whether children or adults. Their work is to be carried on and does not exclude the ecclesiastical ministry whether it be missions or parishes assigned by the Bishops to the Servants of Charity. »

The members of the institute are priest to whom is given the responsibility of the government of the institute and its direction, and lay brothers whose work will be particularly manual labor. The habit of the priests is a black cassock, a sash at the waist, and a crucifix suspended on a cord around the neck.

« My program has always been this: to pray and suffer, » Don Guanella used to say to his priests: « and if you wish to join with me, you must follow this program. »

« Every member must correct his character insofar as he can and adapt himself in everything by being simple and happy, thus becoming a god example to all. »

« The Servant of Charity must go to bed every night so tired from work that he will think he has been beaten. »

« Forgive the young people much. Don't pay attention to their noise and mistakes. Let them do anything just so they do not sin. »

« See to it that each one of you does good to all, evil to no one, without entering into political strife. The politics of our day are similar to those in the time of Pius IX. who said: " If the politicians have their slogans, I also have mine: *Our Father who art in Heaven!*" »

Refutation

The critics of Don Guanella were diminishing, but nonetheless there was always someone who let his voice be heard. Now that the work was progres-

sing, some had to comment on its internal running. What kind of institution is this? A bunch of unhappy people! To those who were looking for perfect works, Don Guanella answered as Don Bosco had done before him: « What is important is to do good, to do it as soon as you can, and in the way you are able. The best may be the enemy of good. »

The Fire at the Institute

On the morning of the Feast of All Saints in 1895, fire broke out in the institute. Its origin was a deliberate attempt of a mob who had been threatening Don Guanella and his household for some time. At the time. Don Guanella was attending to business in Milan. The telegram with the news of the disaster was handed to him as he was preparing to offer Holy Mass. He read it, put it in his pocket and proceeded to the altar. At the Gospel, he preached using the text. « Blessed are the poor in spirit. »

He hurried back to Como and arranged temporary shelter for the stricken inmates who fortunately had escaped death. A sudden loss of years of work and great expense, but he immediately set to work to restore it: « The House of Divine Providence shall rise again from its ashes, more beautiful and

more spacious. Heaven is with us: who can be against us? » Ruins soon disappeared.

So great was the generosity of the people of Como that Don Guanella could only marvel, saying: « How good are the people of Como, and how much they love the Institute. » His benefactors were eager to give in support, as well as to refute the bitterness of the few enemies.

The Four F's

« We find, » said Don Guanella, « That if we build for five or for ten poor folks, money arrives only for five or ten: and no more comes when we cease to confide in Providence. »

The tears which Don Guanella had shed to arrive at his goal were wiped away by the joy he experienced in seeing the smiles of his happy wards.

« The foundation of the Houses of Divine Providence, » he told everyone, « is indicated by the letter *F* repeated four times: namely, *fame*, *freddo*, *fumo*, *fastidi* (hunger, cold, smoke and tribulation): or by the Letter *V* which signifies « Victim », fashioned after the Great Victim of Calvary, associating us with Him in raising towers of salvation for souls.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The recurring theme throughout the Don Guannella memorabilia is « Providence will show the way. » When questioned as to how he accomplished so much good, he would answer simply: « God does it. »

« Divine Providence, » he would say, « sees to every need. Those houses that were started with nothing are those that prosper. »

« Not to trust, is to put obstacles in the Way of Providence, » was a favorite maxim.

« The Lord never tires of giving the means to build houses and churches for His poor and for their souls: Faith! »

« Fair weather is to be feared more than adversity. A boat loaded with cargo travels with difficulty when it is calm: but when the wind blows, the boat speeds, carried by its sails. Difficulties make us speed up. »

« To receive with two hands from Providence, we must give with four hands to the poor of Providence. »

« And the means? » someone always questioned.

The answer: « Our Lord sees and provides. »

« The Chaplets which we pray begin with "Most Holy Providence of God, provide for us—Heart of Jesus, have pity on us, » and the Lord who hears and sees, provides. »

St. Theresa of Avila's motto: « The best thing you can do for the rich is to accept their money as and offering to the poor, » was a favorite quote.

Many of his oft-repeated sayings eventually appeared in print when Don Guanella and his co-workers began publishing a monthly periodical, « Divine Providence. » The first issue came out in December, 1892, and still carries the messages of the Servants of Charity to benefactors and friends. It has proved instrumental in winning friends the world over.

Several stories of Don Guanella's activities as an administrator follow the same pattern: He needs something: Providence supplies it. Moreover Providence acts through human agents, We may safely assume that these « miraculous » and timely contributions were a tribute to Don Guanella's constant earthly endeavors as well as to his staunch faith.

One such incident took place one day when the superior of one of his schools discovered there was

absolutely no food available for lunch, She gave the students the bad news and then went off to tell Don Guanella.

He received her announcement calmly, answering, « It's only 11:30. We still have half an hour to go. Providence still has time to provide. » He then returned to his writing.

The Sister went back to the students and asked them to pray. At noon, a cart arrived and left a sack of rice at the door. No one seemed to know where the cart had come from, and the students considered the event miraculous. According to Don Guanella, « Providence had provided. »

In the same vein, a priest tells of being in Don Guanella's office one day when he was going over his list of debts. « If I had one hundred lire, » said Don Guanella, « I could pay all. » At that moment a Sister entered the room and handed him one hundred lire saying. « A man just came in and asked me to give you this. »

Lest we begin to think that life was quite easy for Don Guanella after all, we have the story of San Salvador, which follows.

It was Saturday

It was Saturday morning and the treasurer of the institute had no money to pay the workers. He went

to Don Guanella. « Well, what do you have for us today? » was the greeting he received. « What do I have? You know well enough today is Saturday. We have to pay the workers. There's absolutely nothing in the cash box. Things couldn't be worse. I don't have anything and I don't know where I can turn. »

Don Guanella laughed, « Is that possible? Let's look and see if there's really nothing. » They went to the cash box. « I guess it is really empty: what can I say? »

« Wait a minute. Don't you have any faith? Any courage? »

« A little, » answered the treasurer.

« Then let's pray, and Providence won't forget us. »

Thus they left things. Noon came and went and later the sun began to go down in the sky. The treasurer's courage was beginning to fail: he was hurrying around not knowing what to do. Don Guanella didn't seem disturbed. His face still beamed with hope.

Towards evening a gentleman came to the institute. After he and Don Guanella had talked about things in general, the topic turned to the financial condition of the house. Surprised at the calmness and restraint of Don Guanella and his faith in Provi-

dence, he reached into his briefcase and taking out the needed sum said: « Let me pay for your workers this time. »

Providence Will Provide

A priest happened to come to the House of Divine Providence and Don Luigi asked him to write some urgent letters for him. Interrupting his work, the priest asked: « But if too many come seeking a home, where will you put them? »

« Just let them get in the door, and Providence will take care of them. »

Another priest asked him: « Father, how can you manage to provide for so many charitable cases? »

And he, with a simplicity all his own, answered: « Don't you know, it is not I, but Providence who takes care of all? »

To a priest who was complaining: « O Father, a hundred years from now, you won't be here, » and pointing up to Heaven « Look up, here we must work and suffer: up there we will enjoy Heaven. »

Sometimes the General Superior of the Sisters urged him to be careful about contracting debts.

« Oh Martorelle, » he answered, « why do you doubt the Providence of God? »

And when the Sisters were frightened on account of grave difficulties, he would say, « Hope, and pray and you will see that the Providence of God will take care of the matter. »

When there was fear about opening new houses, « Oh, Martorelle that you are. Why don't you trust in the Providence of God? It is God who wants it, He will help us. »

The maxims heard most frequently on his lips: « my strength is all in God: if He wants this work, He will help me. »

« Let us confide and hope in God! Let us avoid sin, then shortly God will work. »

« One grain of confidence is worth more than one hundred grains of foresight and human prudence. »



ROME :

Parish: Church of S. Joseph, world centre
of the Holy Crusade for the salvation
of the dying.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AN ARDENT UNDERTAKING

At the extreme end of Lake Como, there is a vast plain called *Pian di Spagna* which is dominated by the ruins of a fort situated between the old and new riverbed of the river Adda and the lake itself. At one time, in the twelfth century, this had been a flourishing center with a beautiful church dedicated to St. Stephen. However, the land had been laid to waste in wartime, and later the rising Adda River had caused the place to become a mosquito-infested swampland. The people were forced to locate elsewhere and chose a site at Sorico. The whole area became wasteland.

A Dream

As a seminarian traveling back and forth from Como to his home, Don Guanella was struck with the thought of this tragic loss of land so near to

his mountain area which required such work to wrest a living from its difficult soil.

Now the time had come when he thought he could do something about this. He proposed to reclaim the land using the labor of his strong mentally deficient boys and men and the directive talents of some of the normal, elderly men who were living under his roofs. Nineteen hundred was a Holy Year, declared by Pope XIII. Don Guanella would undertake this as a work dedicating the entire proposed colony to the Divine Savior.

He managed to secure the property in 1900 and at once arranged for the erection of a beautiful statue of the Divine Savior, Whose help he relied upon for the undertaking. He secured the approval of the nearby residents to bring the retarded boys, and at once set about building a little woodframe church which was called « San Salvador. » The area itself he called New Olonio, to commemorate the Old Olonio.

This fantastic endeavor brought the usual run of criticisms and the taunts. « Don Guanella at last has found a swampy grave for himself and his work. »

His « good boys » (buoni figli) worked hard at leveling the sand and filling in the marshes. Some people asked to move into the section. Weeding, plowing, planting soon changed the whole appearan-

ces. In a few years, lovely meadows and fruitful vineyards had taken the place of swamps and sand dunes.

While the work was in progress, Don Guanella paid tribute to his workers by designing a beautiful statue of Our Lady with a new title, Our Lady of the Worker. In May, 1901, it was erected at a ceremony which drew an unusually large throng of people for such an event. The statue depicts Our Lady standing, while at her feet a tradesman kneels close to her right hand: a farmer venerates her left hand with a kiss.

Soon a permanent church of stone arose, dedicated again to the Divine Savior, with a shrine for Our Lady of the Worker.

Don Guanella also built a small elementary school which was free to the children of the new inhabitants. He was careful to see that proper sanitation was secured, and good drinking water furnished. He arranged for the farmers to be instructed and given demonstrations in the newest and best methods of agriculture.

The Government officially recognized the achievement which included a variety of benefits to the people of the region as well as having given a chance for rehabilitation to a group of mentally retarded boys and men. The Minister of Agriculture awarded a Medal of Honor to Don Guanella in 1905.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

EXTENSION OF THE WORK

When we speak of the life and work of Don Guanella, we frequently use the words *Institute* and *Institution*. Still, if we were to give the impression that he met religious, social, and educational needs by erecting walled buildings, we would misunderstand the whole of his efforts. His attack, born of his love of God and neighbor, meant unremitting activity to set in operation benevolent forces to render prompt assistance to those in need.

He knew that with the establishment of his several homes, schools and two religious congregations in Como, Italy, he had a base for further operations. At this point, Rosa Piatti, directress of the Normal School of Como, came to the institute to assist in the education of the orphans. She was convinced of the value of Don Guanella's work, and offered her life savings to enable him to initiate something similar in the Milan area.

Other benefactors, too, came to the fore: and soon several kindergartens and social centers were established around the edge of the great city. Religious activities conducted by priests and Sisters were subject to attack by anticlericalists still. At one point, Don Guanella thought it wise to have the Sisters modify their religious garb to avoid comment and provocation.

A Shot

The Sisters, undaunted, went about their work among the poor and orphaned. One they were threatened by a man who deemed them competitors to his wife who operated a little home for children. The criticism was absurd and they continued to go along their usual way. One evening, while the Sisters were in their community room, they heard a rifle shot. The bullet whizzed through the room and lodged in the buffet, smashing dishes and glasses. Naturally, they were frightened: but their usual trust in Providence returned their courage at the calming words of the superior.

Eight Dollars

In 1894, an opportunity to open an institute or hospice in Milan came. One day while Don Guanella was crossing the Cathedral Square, he met a mon-

signor, a member of the board of administration of an ecclesiastical house.

« You know, of course, that the old and invalid priest have been moved from their former residence at St. Ambrose to that of St. Celsus. Would you like to buy the old house at St. Ambrose? How much would you give for it? »

« Could you give it to me for \$ 3,600? » asked Don Guanella.

« That's very little, but we'll see. Come to the administrators tomorrow. »

The next day he was at the office.

« So you want to buy St. Ambrose. What will you use for money? » asked the administrator jokingly.

« Money is an earthly good, and we tread on the earth always. » answered Don Guanella.

They concluded the contract for \$ 6,600. Don Guanella made a down payment of all that he had: eight dollars. To this he soon added fifty more and then the balance, little by little.

A Great Banker

The happy Sisters entered their large new home with its courtyard, colonnade, and a beautiful public church.

« Well, you've entered, but have you paid for the house? » teased a pastor who was a friend of the institute.

The young Sister Portress answered in all simplicity: « The Lord knows that we are the Daughters of Providence, and His Providence will take care of us. »

On another day, a pastor was visiting a resident. Seeing the deprivations which added to the Sisters' work load, he asked: « How can you go on? »

« Don Luigi has inspired us to hope always in the Lord for everything. » answered one of the Sisters. « The Lord, » he says, " is a great banker who gives interest more or less high, depending upon our correspondence to grace and fidelity to prayer. »

One day their trust in Providence was rewarded by the kind offer of a master builder, Antonio Annoni, formerly of Pianello.

« Put a little trust in me and I'll do you a favor, » he said. « I would like to build you your institute here at St. Ambrose. » This he did, as well as renovate the old monastery. Now the institute was convenient and capable of accomodating two hundred children, old women, and invalids in various departments.

Three Doves

Demands on Don Guanella grew, but he remained ever a kind father to his children. When someone was ill or in danger of death, Don Guanella seemed to touch the most beautiful and expressive notes of Christian hope to encourage him.

The Sisters relate an incident connected with the death of the first Sister in the House of St. Ambrose ad Nemus.

A young novice became dangerously ill and was permitted to pronounce her three vows. On this day she received a gift of three pretty white doves. When Don Luigi saw the pleasure which the gift brought her, he dissuaded the Sister nurse from taking them away to another room. «She enjoyed them,» he said, «and their beauty will serve to remind her of the loveliness of Paradise.»

One of the doves died shortly: another liked to perch upon the pillow of the patient. When Don Luigi visited Sister for the last time, all the while he spoke words of comfort to her, a beautiful smile lighted her countenance, and thus she expired. Then it was noted, that the friendly little dove, too, had died.

This story is reminiscent of the *fioretti* of St. Francis of Assisi, the lovely incidents which gladden the heart because of their simplicity and warmth.

Don Guanella was ever an admirer of the « Poor One. » as was noted in the biography he had written and by the imitation of his virtues.

Even to Excess?

« On the occasion of a Catholic Congress, » says a priest, « I went with a companion to find a room at St. Ambrose. There I found Don Luigi who quickly said there was plenty of room. As it turned out, the room we occupied was Don Luigi's. In the morning we asked him where he had stayed. He smilingly told us he had spent the night in "a nook in the wall." »

At another time, in order to make room for a priest, he gave up his own bed and passed the night in the church before the tabernacle.

Once when the household was short of sheets during a time of unusual illness, he pulled the ones from his own bed and sent them to the infirmary.

At times, his charity was considered to be excessive and he encountered the opposition of his confreres and Sisters for it. Once, when they were trying to stop him from giving some money away, he threw it out the window to the poor man standing outside. Another time, not knowing what to give, he tossed his new shoes out the window.

The Sale of « Cairo »

On the patronal feast of St. Ambrose, the first Thursday after Easter, as the guests were seated around the table, Don Guanella asked the owner of some property: « How much are you asking for your Cairo? » *Cairo* was the name of a cluster of small houses around a courtyard, part of which he rented, although he also owned a small number.

« That's not for you, Don Luigi, » said the owner, « you would have to have a thousand dollars and not a penny less. »

« Much less, much less, » answered Don Guanella, For the time being he contented himself with renting the property. In 1903, he was able to purchase it with a loan from a lombard bank and a gift from Antonio Annoni. He dedicated it to St. Cajetan.

The Taxes of the Wealthy Owner

A funny episode occurred but the outcome proved to be a fortunate one. The Commune at Milan introduced a heavy « family tax. » Don Guanella's charges were termed his « family » and therefore Don Guanella as "a wealthy owner" was expected to pay a tax accordingly.

Immediately Don Guanella went before the Commune to state his case: his family consisted of five hundred poor and afflicted persons, but all of these would be dependent upon the public tax if they were not in his home. The officials listened and reduced the tax to a minimum which he paid.

However, soon after this a stranger came to the door of the house and handed Don Luigi an envelope with which to pay the original tax.

Some time later when plans had been made for the building of a new St. Gaetano Institute on McMahon Street designed for the education of poor children the Commune entered into the expansion program and paid for the new building.

Even the socialist mayor of Milan, when speaking of Don Guanella's school, said: « These are the kind of institutes that Milan needs. »

CHAPTER TWENTY

FOR YOUTH AND OTHERS

A comprehensive program such as Don Guanella had in mind was nowhere in existence in his day or place. He noted needs by keen observation and study and then went to work to alleviate them. His was a spiritual, social, and educational mission.

To preserve the integrity of the family was foremost in his ideal of service. Whatever disrupted or threatened it was to be overcome. Next in importance was the proper education of children, even adults when this could be given them. Youth's needs and their guidance had been the lifelong challenge to Don Bosco, and Don Guanella desired to imitate him in providing resources to develop for their particular work in life. Parallel with this love for youth was his concern for the afflicted of any class, the sick, and lonely aged. Someone referred to him with his widespread interest as an « Encyclopedia of the Needy! » « Every case presented is analyzed: every case is helped. »

Lest we think that he planned the good only left others to do it, the following little true stories come to mind. Many more could be told which would fill volumes but here they serve as a bit of a pause before we note him in the ceaseless activity which gave rise to the start of many foundations.

He frequently gathered homeless youths, straight from the streets, sheltered them, fed them, supplied their medical and other needs, and sought employment according to capacity. The people of Como called them « Don Guanella's kids. »

When visiting the house where his « good children » the mentally retarded lived, he found time to play games with them. Once in the midst of a hilariously good game, a visitor was announced in the parlor. « The enjoyment will end immediately if I leave, » he thought, and thereby tapered it to a point which would not disappoint the youngsters. Of course he arrived a little late and had to face a somewhat irritated dignitary. « After all, » he explained, « the children and the words are the owners of the house, and they rightly employ me first of all. »

« I remember » says a confrere, « when Don Luigi would go by carriage to Santa Maria in Lora or to Cernobbio, he would stop long enough to call for one of the crippled children who could not walk to enjoy the carriage ride with him. »

Once when returning from Lora, he saw an old man on the road. He got out of the carriage, helped the old fellow into it and ordered the driver to take him to his doorstep.

In Search of the Distressed

« He who gives to the poor, receives from God. It isn't enough only to help the poor, we must go out in search of them. » This then, was Don Guannella's principle of action. He literally went out into the streets to find them: the castaways, the parolees from prisons, the deformed, the crippled. To all he would give the same encouragement: « Have faith and courage. I'll give you something to eat and something to wear: at the same time let us commend ourselves to the Lord. »

Meeting beggars in the street, or seeing unfortunates in the farm houses, he approached them and inquired kindly about their plight, asking many questions, suggesting where they might go for help. Often he himself made application to the proper authorities or agencies, according to need. He remained interested in them until he was sure that they had the proper help.

One winter evening, he came home with an old man dressed in rags whom he had found penniless

and homeless on the street. He told his staff to give the man supper and a bed. The meal could be provided easily, but it was impossible to accomodate the man: there was not a single bed available.

He listened for a while and then cut short all argument, saying: «It is Providence Who has sent him to us: if there is no other place, put him in my bed. » Seeing that he meant this, his co-workers managed to find a place for him to sleep.

The next morning, the old man was nowhere to be found. There was an immediate check-up to see if he had taken off with anything valuable. No indeed, everything was still there.

When they told Don Guanella he had taken nothing, he laughed heartily, knowing now their hesitancy. He could not resist joking with them about their « mistrusting natures. »

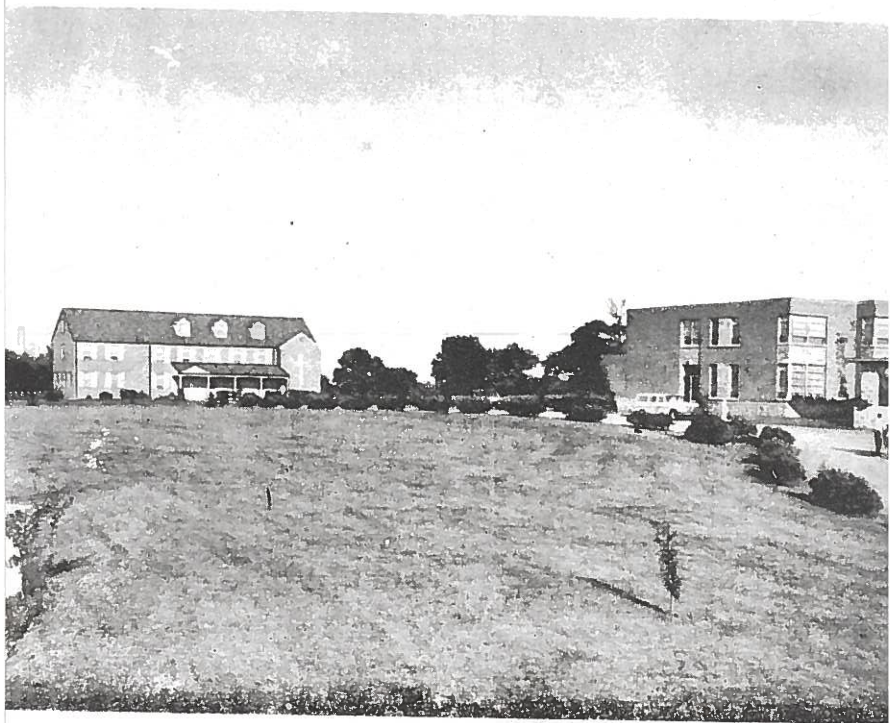
One dark night, guided by a lantern carried by one of his confreres, he was making his way along a dark cow path when they came upon a drunken fellow stretched across their trail. Don Guanella tried to arouse him but to no avail. He tried to carry him on his back but could not do so even with his confrere's aid. He sent for others to give him a hand, and together they carried the drunk to the institute. The next morning, he awoke to consciousness in a clean strange room, and was overcome with shame

to the point of expressing his gratitude and remorse over and over again to Don Luigi for the kindness shown him.

Empty Pockets

It was said of him, partly as a joke but actually somewhat seriously, that he had a mania for always having empty pockets and empty hands. But with those hands he sought to do something for the poor and aged always by constantly giving them small gifts, comforting them, and placing his hands upon their heads with the gift of His priestly blessing. Some had never known such kindness: others were taken far back to their childhood where they recalled the love of their parents.

He had confidence in charity as if it were a capital investment. He would say: « As a vine by pruning becomes strong and produces much, so an offering to the poor becomes larger as it helps them: and we receive all the more as if from an inexhaustible font. »



SPRINGFIELD

Mich. (U.S.A.)

Don Louis Guanella School.



RECEIVED
JAN 10 1961
U.S. AIR FORCE

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

FERVOR AT WORK

« Nothing succeeds like success » is a homely proverb. Now that the Houses of Providence were spreading, commendations were coming from many sources. Invitations to start similar houses came from all over Italy.

We certainly cannot follow the history of every foundation here, but we can trace some interesting highlights in unique instances. Surely we can say that every beginning was providential. The house in Belgioioso, for example, resulted from contacts made while the Sisters were begging alms to support the work in general. The one at Livraga, Lodigiano, has its origin narrated by the local pastor:

« I had come to Como to bring a patient to Don Guanella. He received me cordially and we talked for some hours. Finally he looked at me closely and said: " You must be a preacher and a missionary! " »

« " Yes, " I answered, " but my preaching is pretty commonplace. " »

« " Right now, " he said, " I'm in an embarrassing position. I need someone to preach the annual retreat to the Sisters. Do you think you possibly could spare a week to do it? " »

« " You've been so kind to me, I don't see how I could refuse, " I answered. »

• « At the end of the retreat, » continues the pastor, « I was so edified by the spirit of abnegation and sacrifices shown by the Sisters that I said to Don Guanella: « I have been thinking for some time about having some of the Sisters in my parish. If I can find a house, I'll write to the superior and I'm sure she will not be able to say no. »

In accordance with Don Guanella's great wish to reclaim old religious houses seized under the Suppression Act of 1865, he now had the joy of obtaining a house which had once belonged to the Ursulines. Fortunately, Guanella who found it perfectly suited for a kindergarten, home and oratory.

A Special Work

The pastor at Saronno had met with a sad case. Since it was a problem generally unsolved, he thought to discuss the need from the pulpit for a home for unmarried girls and older women who lacked

capacity to earn their living and had no established means of support.

A zealous parishioner, Mrs. Victoria Lucini, offered a little piece of property for the purpose and wrote to Don Guanella: « It's at the end of town, in a nice spot facing the mountains, with healthy air and surroundings, five acres of very good fertile ground, with a house and a little stable. Would not that be a good place for the home? »

Some time afterwards the property became the House of Divine Providence, well equipped, well-adapted for its new function, it was placed under the patronage of the glorious virgin, St. Agnes.

After a Pastoral Visit

As we have already seen, Bishop Valfré had recommended prudence to Don Guanella. When he came to see him before leaving for Rome in 1900, he blessed Don Guanella and advised him not to open any more houses at this time: rather to consolidate those existing ones.

A short time later as he was making his pastoral visit in Valtellina at Ardenno, the Bishop saw the great need of an institute to help the unfortunates of this area. Surely someone must gather in these poor unfortunates lest they reach an even worse

state. The Bishop asked the pastor to establish something for at least the most needy. There was no other choice but to call on Don Guanella. He was called by the Bishop, who, without any preamble said: « There is need of an institute at Ardenno, and quick. » Don Guanella answered: « But your Excellency, before you left for Rome you said you would help me only if I opened no more houses, and consolidated those I already had! »

The Bishop laughed.

« But, » continued Don Guanella, « I'm always happy to accept the orders of my Bishop, command and I will obey. »

Then the Bishop, with a half concealed smile said: « No, I don't order you to open a house, but rather two houses, one for men, the other for women. » And seeing the joy on Don Guanella's face, he added: « Hurry up. May God accompany you and bless you. »

But there was no need to tell Don Guanella to hurry to start a new institution: he went to it with an ardent and a ready will.

A garden of Flowers

In 1900, Providence sent Don Guanella a garden of flowers-oleander and olive trees and a cultivated vineyard—one of the most enchanting panoramas on

Lake Como. Here at Menaggio was a lovely villa once the home of the rich Countess of St. Rocco who had it built in Switzerland. It had been awarded a prize at the World Exposition in Paris from which it was shipped, piece by piece to Menaggio.

This she gave to Don Luigi so that he could establish one of his homes in that splendid environment. Here he opened a « Home of Olives » for a group of mentally retarded from well-to-do families, who need care and companionship as much as do the poor.

At the inauguration, he gathered the children and built a large bonfire of faggots, while the Litany was being sung.

Perched on a Rock

On the edge of a rock jutting out from the beautiful shores of Lake Como, he built a house and dedicated it to St. Anthony.

On the slope of this rock, almost perpendicular to the lake, the noble Giovanni Manzi in about 1880, gave work to the people of the vicinity by designing a beautiful summer home. Set in a lovely park, rich in trees and flowers and with interwinding walks gave the place a singular aspect of elegance and hardiness.

Don Guanella admired its beauty, and dreamed up projects for it.

« Don Giovanni, » he said one day, half in jest and half seriously, « why don't you enlarge the big beautiful garden of Musso with a home for once wealthy ladies who now pitifully need help? The House of Guanella could take care of it and direct it. »

The gentleman answered, « Fine dreams for the Pastor of Pianello. »

When the noble Giovanni Manzi died unexpectedly in 1883 all that beautiful extension of flowers and trees remained a silent oasis of beauty and peace, but the idea of Don Guanella to have a home for impoverished ladies, once expressed in a joking manner, but with a serious intention, became a reality in a short time.

A Rest Home

Near the park and at the Rock of Musso in the locality of Genico, was a villa given to Don Guanella by the contractor, Antonio Annoni, the generous benefactor of the houses near St. Ambrose. That villa situated on a knoll with a marvellous view of the mountains and the lake was given as a gift to Don Guanella and there he established a rest home for Sisters and convalescents dedicating it to St. Anthony: he intended also to destine it to constant

prayer of impetration and reparation by Nocturnal Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

A Mixed Blessing

At Barzio, a picturesque resort Town, Don Guarella opened another house « through a happy misunderstanding » as he put it.

Invited to Barni the home of the Apostle of the Moors, Don Biagio Verri, who had gone to Africa to rescue the small children from slavery and bring them to Italy for a Christian education, Don Guarella had hopes of opening a home there. Upon arrival he went to the cemetery as he wished to say Mass over the tomb of Don Biagio. He met instead, the old pastor of Barzio who laughed at his mistake over the name of the town, but added: « Providence has changed your destination for you, don't disappoint me now. »

The countryside was in a festive mood as they were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the ordination of the old pastor. Nothing better could be done than to leave a permanent memorial of that happy occasion at Barzio of what he had intended to give to Barni.

In fact, Sisters were sent to open a kindergarten, Oratory and trade school. Later, he established a home for aged, orphans, and retarded.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

IN ALL OF ITALY

During the National Eucharistic Congress at Venice in 1897, His Excellency Giuseppe Callegari, Bishop of Padua, knowing the success of the works of Don Guanella, desired Venice to take advantage of them.

Don Guanella made known to his Eminence Giuseppe Sarto, the Patriarch, that if Providence called him to the Province of Venice, he could not refuse.

« I was having supper one freezing winter night in 1898, » again recalls Don Guanella himself, « when a great big priest with a great big heart presented himself and told of two old priests in need of care, both poor and paralyzed by illness. They were received and treated with great charity for a number of years until their death. This act of charity so pleased His Excellency, Antonio Polin, the Bishop



CHEALSEA
Mich. (U.S.A.) ;

St. Louis School: Benediction of the
Chapel.

of Adria, that he opened the doors of his seminary of Rovigo to many aspirants of the Servants of Charity.

For Invalid Priests

The priest who had brought the two old priests to the home returned to his own parish and wanted to endow his own diocese with a home for aged priests. He wrote to Don Guanella and told him he had the opportunity of acquiring some beautiful property at Fratta, Polesine, a little town on the road from Rovigo to Verona.

The proposition was accepted and the property handed over. Don Guanella then went to work on the job of remodeling the houses. On April 1, 1900 he opened the new house. Benefactors were many and the house soon grew from just a home for aged priests to a home for old people, orphans and mentally retarded. Soon an oratory for boys was opened, among the first in Polesine, and then a trade school for the girls of the neighborhood.

For this new work a very generous woman, Maria Cagnoni, in Palazzi, who had lost both her husband and her only daughter in a railroad accident, gave as a memorial a large sum, for the charitable work of mercy.

« Take Note »

Through the merits of the zealous pastor, a kindergarten, orphanage, and a trade school for girls at Berra and its direction given to the Sisters of Don Guanella.

Don Guanella could not refuse to incorporate into his works a school for poor children at Gatteo. Don Luigi Ghinelli, a priest of exemplary virtue, desired to give to the most needy little ones a Christian education in preparation for life. He was anxious to have his work continue and proposed to give everything to Don Guanella's Congregation before he died. Not receiving an answer he then had recourse to a sure means.

Knowing that St. Pius X. admired Don Guanella, Don Ghinelli explained his intention to the Pope in an audience, and asked his advice.

The Pope answered him, « Yes, you will do well, because Don Guanella is a saint, a true saint of miracles which he obtains from Divine Providence. »

« Holy Father, » asked Don Ghinelli, « would you speak to him for me? »

« Of course, » answered St. Pius X., « he comes to see me often and at the first opportunity I will talk to him about you. »

« Write it down, » insisted the priest.

« My son, I will speak to him of you, » answered the Pope, but Don Ghinelli placing his hand on the arm of the Pope, insisted, « take note, because Your Holiness has many things on your mind and you might forget. »

Smiling, St. Pius X. taking out his little note book, wrote it down and underlined it.

One House After Another

In quick succession these houses gave refuge to many, and increased offerings added to the assistance of the Sisters and consolidated the various forms of charity. They could thus correspond better to their calling providing homes for the aged and small hospitals.

Don Guanella accepted the invitation repeatedly given by the Bishop and City for the Congregation of Charity to open a House at Ferentino in the Province of Frosinone, where Bishop Vincenzo Maciotti had left a legacy for an institution for orphans in an old convent of the Franciscans, adapted for the purpose. Besides the orphanage they had room for aged, long needed in that locality.

A National Disaster

On September 8, 1905, Calabria in the South was hit by a devastating earthquake. Among the first to go to the aid of the children left orphaned was a Father Gerardo Beccaro from Milan who had already been doing great work for the numerous orphans gathered in the little farm colonies in Italy since 1903.

The homeless were gathered together by him from the wreckage of their homes in Calabria and found not only help in the Institute of St. Gaetano, but also a paternal welcome from Don Guanella who along with his priests and sisters, spared no sacrifice.

At the close of 1908, another quake again brought death and ruin to Calabria and Sicily: the population fled in fear and those that remained lived in the ruins of Messina, Reggio and the other communities which were struck.

« I'm Going to Calabria »

Feeling deeply this national disaster, Don Guanella felt he must help these stricken people by going to the scene.

« Early in the morning, » narrates Father Benedetti, a Redemptorist friend and confidante of Don Guanella, « bag in hand, Don Luigi arrived at my

front door. He had travelled all night and had just come from the railroad station. »

« "What's all this?" I asked. »

« "If you have nothing against it," he said to me, "I'm going right away to Calabria." »

« "No, Don Luigi, no." » The reason I said *no* was because I felt he should moderate his zeal in opening many works of charity and rather direct his efforts towards getting vocations to help him with the works he already had.

He recognized, as usual, the Will of God: and he did not go. However, his thirst to give himself in charity was not satisfied and on January 4, 1909, he wrote me from Milan, « I have offered to take in some orphans or aged victims of the disaster of Calabria, in Milan, Rome and Como ».

In Memory of a Child

After this disaster, Don Luigi had frequent contact with Bishop Morabito, the Bishop of Mileto in Calabria, who begged him again and again to send some Sisters to run an orphanage.

A couple, Mr. and Mrs. Lacquaniti Argirò of Laureana di Borello, had lost their only son in the quake at Messina where he had been at school, and

wanted to donate a kindergarten which would stand as a living memorial to their son.

Don Guanella answered that he could not grant their request. They came directly Rome — perhaps they had heard of the methods of Don Ghinelli — and in audience with St. Pius X. expressed their hopes. The Pope blessed them and added, « I assure you Don Guanella will fulfill your desires. »

Invited by the Pope, Don Guanella opened the new house.

In Memory of a Child

After this disaster, Don Luigi had frequent contact with Bishop Morabito, the Bishop of Mileto in Calabria, who begged him again and again to send some sisters to run an orphanage.

A couple, Mr. and Mrs. Lacquariti Argiro of Laureana di Borello, had lost their only son in the quake at Messina where he had been at school, and

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

SWITZERLAND

Stricken with pleurisy in 1897, Don Guanella was ordered by the doctor to go to Montespluga in Switzerland for a period of convalescence. Here he found fellow priests from Milan and Pavia with whom he was able to pass the time and so he felt less put out by his enforced vacation. For some reason or other, these conversations often turned to Switzerland which was primarily Protestant.

One day as he entered the Catholic church at Andeer, which was founded by his relative Don Gaudenzio Bianchi, Don Guanella's mind was uneasy because of memories and future plans: one question kept forcing itself upon him: « Why not build a Catholic church at Spluga for the shepherds and workers who go there as well as for the tourists? »

A short time later the providential occasion offered itself. A hotel owner came to the priests and asked to have one celebrate Mass for the tourists.

His request was immediately granted. However, Don Guanella went even further and thought to make it a permanent arrangement. He would see to it that the faithful would be able to assist at Mass in a land where for many centuries the Mass had ceased to be celebrated.

« I Admire Your Courage »

So it came to pass that one day as he was walking in the hills he came to the decision: A Catholic church will be built at Splügen.

The Bishop of Coira, blessing his project, gave him an offering and added: « I admire your courage, » and expressed the hope that the service of the Church would be extended to the entire valley area to the advantage of the shepherds and Italian workers in the region and perhaps could even reopen the Catholic mission station at Andeer.

A year later, he received an urgent request to extend his work to a small school at Roveredo, where forty years before a good priest founded for the boys of the Canton Ticino of the Valley Mesolcina. The school was to serve those who came from this locality, and German Switzerland where religious instruction had been suppressed.

The Bishop of Coira didn't hesitate to let him know the difficulties. « Try it, » he said, « but it will be a waste of time and money. Under present conditions you won't be able to support a Catholic school at Mesolcina. »

Trusting in Providence, Don Guanella bound himself to pour life into the small school dedicated to St. Ann and devoted to the boys of families in moderate circumstances.

The College was transferred into a larger building in Roveredo and the house occupied by the College was transformed into a home for the aged assisted by Sisters of St. Mary of Providence. This, too, was enlarged to be able to care for retarded girls. This home is called the « Immaculata. »

A Valley Without Priests

From the results which he had obtained in the Valley of Reno in the Diocese of Coira, Don Guanella was encouraged to take on an even more difficult task: to enter into the Bregaglia Valley where the Catholic faith had been prohibited since 1550. The Bishop of Coira said one day, « I remember when there were many valleys in the diocese where Mass was not celebrated and where there were few Catholics. Now there are many Catholics and only

one valley, Bregaglia, where there are no priests. It's up to me to provide for the Bregaglia Valley. » Don Guanella answered: « Let me try: and give me your blessing. » The Bishop gratefully accepted and gave him an offering with which to open a mission station.

Thus in 1900, Don Guanella acquired a perfect location at Promontogno which was an excellent vantage point. The house was made of rough wood, but new and easily adaptable. He built a chapel in one wing and Mass was celebrated there for the first time since the Reformation.

In time, two more foundations were opened in Switzerland. One rose from the ruins of an ancient Benedictine monastery and to which St. Pius X. donated the bronze tabernacle for the chapel. The other was given by the mother of Luigi Rossi who had been assassinated at Bellinzona shortly after having been elected to head the Canton of Ticino.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A DEVOUT PILGRIM

More than a million pilgrims went to pay homage to Leo XIII. in the Jubilee Year of 1900. Don Guanella guided a number of pilgrimages to Rome and Pompei and was happy to bring souls to the center of Christianity.

Likewise, during the pontificate of Leo XIII., Marian Pilgrimages to Lourdes and International Eucharistic Congresses grew in popularity. In 1903, recognizing the many graces he had received from Our Lady of Lourdes, Don Guanella felt that he himself must go to pay homage at this shrine of Our Lady. Again in 1908, invited to go to the Eucharistic Congress in London, he accompanied an immense Italian pilgrimage.

In the Holy Land

When in 1902, the Committee « Pro Palestine » announced a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to be

presided over by Cardinal Ferrari, Don Guanella presented himself with the ardent desire of satisfying his own personal devotion and bringing spiritual benefits to his works.

The pilgrims assembled in Rome. Mass was celebrated at the Altar of the Throne in St. Peter's and their standard bearing the Red Cross of Jerusalem was blessed. Leo XIII. received them in special audience and said to them, « When you have reached the shores of the East where Christ Our Lord poured forth His Blood, turn your eyes to the beautiful shores of Italy and think of him in whom is renewed the Passion forced to drink also the cup of gall and vinegar. »

From Naples they went by ship to Messina, then across to the Pireus, stopping to visit Athens, then Beirut, and finally to Caifa. The Pilgrimage took them to Mount Carmel, Nazareth, the lake of Genesareth, and to all the places made holy by the passing of Our Lord.

At Calvary

Here, they came in procession to the Holy Sepulchre where Don Guanella wished to spend the night in the place where Our Lord's Body had rested until its Resurrection.

At Jerusalem, the pilgrims made the Way of the Cross and in a gesture of prayer and penance made the entire way barefoot. Then, following ceremonies at the sepulchre, they embarked again for the long trek home.

A Talk and a Contract

One day, as he was travelling from Jerusalem to San Giovanni, Montano with Monsignor Radini Tedeschi, the monsignor made him a proposal: « Don Guanella, why don't you take over the little colony of Monte Mario? » Monte Mario was a section of Rome where a small agricultural school had been opened in 1901 in the hopes of keeping the youngsters close to the Faith. However, its existence seemed doomed.

Don Guanella listened to the proposal and asked for time to think it over.

Having returned to Rome in May of 1903, by chance he met Monsignor Tedeschi in St. Peter's. The Monsignor stopped him: « Speaking of coincidences, » he said, « I just wrote yesterday to Como, inviting you to Rome to confer about the Colony of St. Joseph on Monte Mario! »

Thus the negotiations began. The thought and joy of being able to work in Rome in the Capitol

of Catholicism and to have an institution in the very shadow of the Vatican, left little doubt as to his acceptance. With the transaction finished, the sons of Don Guanella came to take possession of the Colony of St. Joseph on Monte Mario, and a new Chapter in their history was begun.

So Don Luigi came to Rome — thus satisfying his great desire to be near the Sovereign Pontiff, and the Center of Christianity, to give his works that exuberant vitality which he begged from Providence.

At Jerusalem the pilgrims made the Way of the Cross. In Rome the Monsignor made him a proposal: « Don Guanella, why don't you take over the little colony of Monte Mario? » Monte Mario was a section of Rome where a small agricultural school had been opened in 1901 in the hopes of keeping the youngsters close to the Faith. However, its existence seemed doomed.

Don Guanella listened to the proposal and asked for time to think it over.

Having returned to Rome in May of 1903, by chance he met Monsignor Teschì in St. Peter's. The Monsignor stopped him: « Speaking of coincidences, » he said, « I just wrote yesterday to Comò, inviting you to Rome to confer about the Colony of St. Joseph on Monte Mario! »

Thus the negotiations began. The thought and joy of being able to work in Rome in the Capitol

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

IN THE ETERNAL CITY

At Rome he began a small institution for the retarded, but soon saw the need was so great that he would have to look for larger quarters. He had his eye on a convent of Discalced Carmelite priests at Saint Pancratius that had been confiscated by the government under the Suppression Law of 1870.

He spoke of it to the Pope in an audience, « In Rome, » he said, « the center of charity, there is not one institute for poor retarded children. If your Holiness will give his consent, I will undertake to make a home for these poor children in the building that once belonged to the Carmelites, right next to the Basilica of St. Pancratius. »

The Pope gave his consent.

« And will Your Holiness allow us to name it after him? »

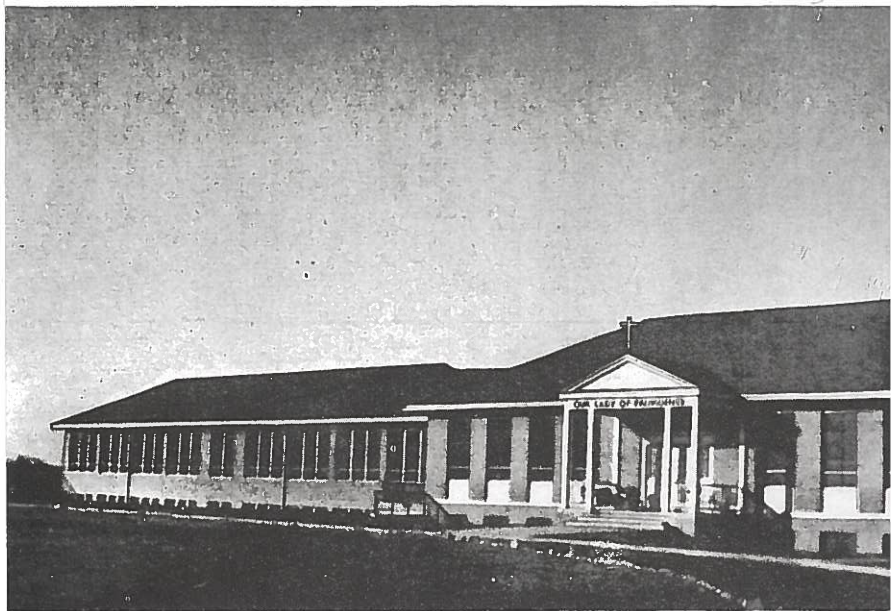
The Pope laughed, « Yes, yes, put me at the head of your retarded patients: immortalize me through them, call it Pius X. Home. »

« Do you Want to Build a Church? »

At the close of the dedication of the new institute, Don Guanella told the crowd that had come that only a part of his dream had been realized. Another part still existed, but only in his mind and the idea would not leave him in peace. « I hope to build a church in the most abandoned spot in Rome, which although near the Vatican, lacks sufficient religious assistance. »

One day as he was being received in audience, the Pope turned to him and asked, « Do you want to build a church? I will help you. » Don Guanella was thrilled. He didn't waste any time, but dashed out to look for a suitable spot. He soon found what he was looking for and entered into negotiations: but he had only about two thousand lire. « Father » said the agent, « what can we do with that? » But he took the small sum!

In the beginning of 1909, he built a small temporary chapel of wood which the people called their « little basilica. » He soon was able to add two rooms for a kindergarten, a kitchen for hot lunches during the winter, and eventually an oratory for boys and girls.



NORTHVILLE

Mich. (U.S.A.) :

Institute « Our Lady of Providence » of
Don Guanella's Sisters.

A Temporary Church

One day, the roof fell in on the building that was used as a residence for priests and an oratory on holy days. It was a miracle that no one was killed. It was soon made known to the Pope who said laughingly. « What will Don Luigi do now? »

The Pope called Aristide Leonari, a famed engineer, and told him: « Build Don Guanella an immense building with a hall, a library, reception rooms, a chapel, and many covered spaces for recreational facilities so that his poor man can keep on going with his work of helping the poor of the world, » and he added, « I will pay the entire cost. »

Having arranged the temporary church the best he could, Don Luigi laid the corner stone for the construction of the new church dedicating it to St. Joseph in honor of St. Pius X.'s (Joseph Sarto), patron saint.

The Generosity of the Pope

As soon as the foundation was finished, Don Guanella reported to the Holy Father, who wanted to know what means were available to continue the work.

« Your Holiness, » answered Don Guanella, « the little I had is about used up. »

« All right, try to collect some and we will match what you collect. »

Within a week Don Guanella had found 50,000 lire. »

« Fine, » said the Holy Father, « here is our promised 50,000 lire. »

After this, a lady of Rome gave another 50,000 lire for the Church of St. Joseph. In another audience the Holy Father laughingly extended his hands and said « are you here to ask for money as usual? »

« Yes, Your Holiness. »

« But I heard you just received 50,000 lire. »

« That's true, » responded Don Guanella, « but your Holiness will not do less than a Roman lady. »

And that time, the Pope was more generous than ever.

« Until Midnight »

During another audience, the Holy Father seeing him, looked surprised, but finishing his rounds, he turned to him and inviting him with fatherly interest said, « Come, come in, » and he conducted him to a private audience.

The poor priest, in great commotion, held his breath. It was the Pontiff who began, « What have

you to tell me? That the foundation of the Church of St. Joseph are looking up, waiting for Providence? »

« Yes, Holy Father, » he answered, « the foundations are waiting for the Providence of all, and maybe even from Your Holiness. »

Smilingly, St. Pius X. replied, « but doesn't Providence come from God? »

« Yes, Holy Father, and the Houses of Divine Providence received all and will continue to receive all from God and so we and our friends have no other hope than in God. »

« Then, » said the Holy Father, « you do not want help. »

« Yes, the help of Your Holiness is exactly what we want, because You represent God Himself. »

The Pope then asked Don Guanella if with so many concerns he could sleep at night, and Don Guanella laughingly replied, « Oh yes, I sleep even too much. Sometimes in Milan in the street car when I should get off at the Cathedral, it takes me to Porta Ticinese, and when on the train instead of getting off at Lodi, I awaken at Piacenza. »

« And then, quietly, quietly and well rested, I return without telling anyone so they won't make fun of me. »

« And with all these worrisome thoughts? »

« I worry about them until midnight, and then from then on I let God worry. »

His Holiness laughed heartily, and blessed Don Guanella again.

The Church is Finished

With the aid of Providence, the church was finished. Don Guanella blessed it on March 19, 1912, celebrating the first Mass. Among those present was Cardinal Ferrari of Milan with a large pilgrimage from Milan and numerous other Cardinals, bishops, priests, and lay people.

Some days later, a photographer asked to be allowed to take pictures of everything. « What for? » asked Don Guanella.

« The Holy Father wants to see everything you have, » said the photographer.

A short while before he had been received in audience and the Pope again showed his benevolence.

« Are we ready to consecrate the Church? » asked the Pope.

« Yes, Your Holiness. »

« But you weren't able to supply all the necessary furnishings for the altars, » insisted the Pope. « Your Holiness, I always counted on Providence to help me, » replied Don Guanella.

« I will be Providence again this time. Go into the storerooms and choose what you need. »

A week after the informal dedication, a group of the workers and benefactors had an audience. The Pope entered and gave his hand to be kissed by all, saying, « I'm looking for Don Guanella and I don't find him. Where is this Don Guanella? » Don Guanella who was kneeling at the end of the line, got up and approached the Holy Father, « we came to thank Your Holiness for Your help in the erection of the Church of St. Joseph. » « Ah, » interrupted St. Pius X., « you want to give me a sermon! » He didn't want any thanks, but said in a loud majestic voice, « I beg God to bless you all, especially the work of Don Luigi Guanella, for the good he has done, does and will do. »

In another audience, as soon as the Pope saw him enter, he stretched out his arms to him, and opening his hands as though he were seeking something « Don Luigi, » he said smiling, « What have you for me? » « Holy Father, I give you the completed Church of St. Joseph. »

« Ah, wonderful! And when is the solemn dedication? »

« In the new year, on the Feast of St. Joseph. »

« I like that, Your gift has pleased me. But do you need something from me? »

« Holy Father, I ask Your blessing for my priests and Sisters and all my benefactors. »

« And then, » asked the Pope smiling.

« Your Holiness, to finish the Church, I need just a little more money. »

« Ah, I expected that, » interrupted the Holy Father.

« How much more? »

« 110,000 lire would do it, according to the engineer's estimate. »

« Ah, well, go to Monsignor Bressan and tell him in my name what you need. »

« Thank you, Your Holiness. »

« Do you have the main altar yet? »

« Not yet. »

« Then tell Monsignor Bressan to give you the altar given to me by Prince Chigi. »

When Don Guanella rose to leave, the Pope blessed them all and turned to him and said, « I bless you especially so that you keep well. »

The First Pastor

The first pastor was the Servant of Charity, Don Aurelio Bacciarini, future Bishop of Lugano. He had been named pastor, but had not arrived at Rome: on the contrary, without telling anyone he had gone off to the Trappist Monastery at Centocelle.

Don Guanella went to the Pope, only to be greeted with, « What have you done. You've let Don Bacciarini escape. »

« Holy Father help me, if it is possible to make him return. »

« I can do nothing » he said, « as he has chosen a state of greater perfection. »

Don Guanella went to the Monastery and asked to speak with Don Bacciarini, who had told the door keeper to summon him if anyone came looking for him, that is, anyone but Don Luigi Guanella.

The door keeper forgot to ask his name and only told Don Bacciarini that there was a priest to see him.

When he came in Don Guanella said to him, « you have chosen the better part, and may God bless you, » and left.

For some days, Don Bacciarini remained at the monastery, but always in a state of restlessness: he could not sleep. Finally, he realized that the Trappist life was not for him and returned to St. Joseph's.

For the Dying

The church, in keeping with a promise made by Don Guanella, was dedicated to St. Joseph, patron of the Dying and of a Happy Death. Thus arose the Confraternity to St. Joseph, as Patron of the Dying.

« There is need to live well, » Don Luigi used to say, « But there is a greater need of dying well. What good is all of our work dedicated to the salvation of souls, if we die badly? Today more than ever, there is concern with the joys of this life. Gone is every thought of eternity. What great dangers such thinking holds in store for us. »

The Association took the name of: « The Holy Crusade for the Salvation of the Dying, » and was authorized by St. Pius X. who said: « I am a parishioner of St. Joseph as I am surrounded by it! I want to be the first enrolled in your new Confraternity. »

Rarely has an association of this type grown so swiftly, or received such warm welcome from the Popes, Bishops and pastors both at home and abroad. Centers were founded from Spain to China, and were blessed by many privileges by the Popes. Benedict XV. blessed the archconfraternity especially for the « *Perpetual Masses* » and an uninterrupted chain of Masses formed by the enrolled priests who promise to say one or more Masses each year for the dying.

For the Dying

The church, in keeping with a promise made by Don Guanella, was dedicated to St. Joseph, patron of the Dying and of a Happy Death. Thus arose the Confraternity to St. Joseph, as Patron of the Dying.



ELVERSON (U.S.A.):
The Institute of Our Lady of Providence.



Figure 2: 2012-2014

Figure 3: 2015-2017

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

LOYALTY TO THE POPE

St. Pius X. merited to be called « the Pope of the works of Divine Providence. »

When St. Pius X. received Don Guanella in a private audience for the first time he praised the institute on Monte Mario, and blessed the erection of a home at San Cassiano del Meschio near Riese, his native town, and encouraged him saying, « Pray much so that you can work much. »

« It seemed to me, » wrote Don Luigi, « that in that happy moment, the blessing of the Vicar of Christ was a confirmation of that which Our Lord had already given in heaven, and for my part, I was filled with that joy which brings peace to souls. »

After this first audience, many more followed and each one more cordial.

« On the evening of December 1, 1906, » recalled Don Guanella " I was present at an audience with the Holy Father. There, before the Vicar of Christ, I felt myself to be in a completely superna-

tural atmosphere. The more I looked at the Holy Father, the more it seemed to me that I was close to a man whose feet were touching the earth, and whose soul was in heaven. I experienced a great contentment, and felt my own insignificance in the presence of this great Pope and prayed Almighty God to raise me to the greatness of his ideas and works. »

In Audience

After inaugurating the St. Pius X. Home at St. Pancratius, Don Guanella on the 10th of February, 1907, went to the feet of the Holy Father with his best cooperators, including Giuseppe Canavelli, State Councillor. After a lady had talked of the great good one for the poor retarded in the House of Don Guanella, His Holiness assenting said, « This is the regeneration which man accomplishes by his charity. »

The Commendators, taking the opportunity to inform the Sovereign Pontiff of the good dispositions of the poor retarded, when they find themselves treated with evangelical kindness, rather than with a rod, and their happy response, received this answer: « Ah that blessed humanitarian instruction! Without the spirit of Christ, who would give patience to the

teachers of the subnormals to continue their difficult mission? »

During an audience with a group of benefactors, he asked Don Guanella how many houses he had. He was told more than 30 houses and 20 kindergartens and hospitals. He asked, « And the money? You are very rich because Providence helps you so generously. »

« Come Don Luigi »

He told about another audience. « It was a half hour of Paradise when one thinks that St. Pius X. not only takes the place of Jesus Christ, but mirrors charming affability and divine simplicity. »

« I present Monsignor Bressan and Canon Don Luigi Guanella, » called out the official in charge of the audience.

« Whom do you mean, "Canon" or Don Guanella? » exclaimed the Pope with joyous wit. « Don't confuse names, Say Don Luigi. Come on, Don Luigi. »

Pontifical Directions

Don Luigi showed the greatest veneration for the gentle Christ on earth, from his earliest youth to his last breath.

To be on the side of the Pope meant for him, to render to his paternal heart obedience in all, faithfully as to Christ Himself: he was a soldier of the good battle during the reign of Pius IX., and he remained at his post during that of Leo XIII. and St. Pius X. The duty of remaining faithful to the Pontifical directions was particularly difficult in the reign of St. Pius X. because of the crafty dangers of Modernism.

Don Guanella strengthened over more his youthful disposition of fidelity to the Pope by word, example and teaching.

He was a soldier of the popes, fighting for them, always ardent in their defense: his obedience to their every desire was without limit, without conditions: « Let us look at the star that guides us, and we shall not perish. »

The affirmation of Father Victorio Gregori, Superior of the Pious Society of St. Charles, is better than all words and the testimony we can give: « Oh, the affection he had for the Chair of St. Peter! I have never heard no other Ecclesiastic speak with so much enthusiasm for the Roman Pontiff, nor defend the rights of the Papacy more vigorously! »

« He who is not with the Church is against God, » he repeatedly said during the sad hours of tribulations of the Catholic Church. « The Pope has spoken: that is enough. »

He often repeated the expression of St. Alphonsus: «The word of the Pope is the word of God: the desire of the Pope the desire of God.»

The Vicar of Christ

We cannot pass over this fact related by a witness: «During the early part of October, 1908, I was received in audience by the Holy Father, St. Pius X. Don Guanella was in the same room. The moment he saw the Pope enter, he fell to his knees, hands joined, fixed his eyes on him, and shook him by the shoulders, touched his head, shook his hand, but he did not move, and the Holy Father said, «Leave him a little while longer.» We left the audience room and Don Guanella remained fixed in the same position.

Confidante and Councillor

St. Pius X. had to face great problems besides the condemnation of Modernism: erecting new bases of Catholic action in Italy, resisting the Religious persecution in France, and giving to Christian piety through a deeper Eucharistic Devotion.

In this mighty work of St. Pius X., Don Guanella was near him not only as a faithful priest but also as a man of well balanced counsel and valid help who consoled the heart of his Father.

As soon as the Pope knew him intimately, he did not limit himself to admiring his charitable work, but he esteemed him to the extent of taking advantage of his experience in the very difficult moments of the Church.

Many times the Holy Father had Don Guanella accompany him in his evening walks in the Vatican gardens: sending away the carriage, they walked alone in confidential conversation.

Don Guanella kept absolute secrecy about these colloquies, limiting himself to telling about his audiences, giving exterior descriptions and episodes. Regarding the confidence with which the Pope honored him, and what they talked about, he would never divulge. Only indirect remarks made these things understood.

Clever Friends

Don Guanella had friends among the most distinct personalities in the field of studies and action, in religion, social and political fields, with whom he had frequent contacts, discussions and advice: there was Giuseppe Toniolo, the great teacher of Catholic

Sociology: Monsignor Sichirolo, who died a saintly death in the arms of Don Guanella: Mario Cheri, Apostle of the Organization of Italian Catholic Action Workers: Vico Necchi, President of the Committee of Milan for the Institute of St. Gaetano: Don Davide Albertario, the warlike journalist: Filippo Meda, whose friendship developed from the beginning of the new trend which brought participation of Catholics into Italian political life.

Faith shone through his eyes as a light that revealed both security and calm. « Have faith, have faith! » was the expression constantly on his lips in troubled times and before obstacles that seemed insurmountable. « To pray and to suffer » was heard at times when the very life of his works was threatened. To whomsoever asked him for a new foundation, his first question was: « Have you prayed? » If they answered in the affirmative he took their request into consideration: otherwise he would say, « Pray first. » Looking one day at the progress of his works, he said, « I hope for their final development and triumph, because we have prayed a great deal. »

Away With Sin!

He wanted to exclude even the smallest sin from his houses and would use the words of Joseph Cottolengo:

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

TO PRAY AND TO SUFFER

Faith shone through his eyes as a light that revealed both security and calm. « Have faith, have faith! » was the expression constantly on his lips in troubled times and before obstacles that seemed insurmountable. « To pray and to suffer » was heard at times when the very life of his works was threatened. To whomsoever asked him for a new foundation, his first question was: « Have you prayed? » If they answered in the affirmative he took their request into considerations: otherwise he would say, « Pray first. » Looking one day at the progress of his works, he said, « I hope for their final development and triumph, because we have prayed a great deal. »

Away With Sin!

He wanted to exclude even the smallest sin from his houses and would use the words of Joseph Cotto-

lengo, « Whoever wants to sin, get out of my house. Go through the door, or climb out the window, but in my house there are to be no sins. »

He would also turn to Don Bosco's expression: « I would prefer to see all my works annihilated, than to see one of mine commit sin. I would prefer to see our house burnt to the ground than to know one mortal sin had been committed. »

An Angel At the Altar

« His faith, » says one witness, « was extraordinary. It was enough to see him at the altar to realize it. After receiving Holy Communion at his Mass, he would stop some moments in adoration. To one of his confreres who said this was against the rubrics to stop for five or six minutes he answered: " How can I go on when I have just received Our Lord? I must love Him and I must tell Him how much I love Him! "

He did not even want the berretta placed on the Missal out of respect for the word of God contained therein: he told me when I served his Mass. During the Eucharistic Congress of Milan, in the Church of St. Ambrose ad Nemus, I saw him weep celebrating: in fact I noticed this at other times also. »

« If You Only Knew the Value of the Mass! »

One day in a Church in Southern Italy, out of respect for Holy Mass, he himself swept the sanctuary before celebrating. The Congregation having seen him celebrate with such a great devotion, left the Church marveling and commenting, « That priest is a saint. »

One day when he had come back into the house after celebrating Mass, he heard the bell ring which meant another Mass was to begin. « There's the bell for Mass. » he said, « I must go. » The Superior of the Sisters answered, « Stay here, you have already celebrated Mass. »

« To stay here is all right, but to go and hear Mass is better! » was his answer.

« One morning, » tells a Sister, « while I was cleaning in the house in Como, the bell sounded for our community Mass in the church. Don Guanella was going by, and told me to leave my work and go to the Mass. »

I told him it was my job to be cleaning here in the house: but he only answered, " when the bell rings for Mass, leave whatever you are doing and go to Mass." »

He would often tell the Sisters, « Do not pass up the opportunity of taking part in an extra Mass

when your occupations are not too important. On the contrary, send any others you find along the way. If you only knew the value of just one Mass! »

« For the Lord of the World »

Don Luigi wanted to see devotion to the Blessed Sacrament flourishing both in his own Congregation and in every community. He would liked to have seen perpetual adoration in all his houses: several reasons kept him from doing so, yet he had daily adoration for the Sisters, and urged frequent visits of the patients or residents to the Tabernacle.

When he returned home after an absence, his first visit would be to the Blessed Sacrament, the second to « his children » as he called the retarded, the aged and the sick.

Having arrived one day at one of his Institutes, he said « Let us go first and greet the Lord of the world. »

He would always recite the Breviary before the Blessed Sacrament, and asked that no one disturb him except for very grave reasons.

He never wished, even in the case of a great hurry, that anyone should go through the Church without saying three « Glorias. »

When traveling, he suggested to his companions that they salute Jesus in the Holy Eucharist present in the little towns they passed wherever they could see the belfries.

In his bedroom in the house of Como, there was a little window which looked out on the main altar: how many times his face could be seen from the Church before the hour of rising bell at 4:30 or 5:00 - late in the evening and even during the night!

Against Blasphemy

His profound faith could not tolerate blasphemy. He was indignant when he heard it, even rebellious.

At that time, blasphemy was often used almost as an insult to priests. To hear Almighty God and the Blessed Virgin offended with obscenity made him shudder. « God insulted by a worm, » he would say. He could not let it pass: if it were in ignorance or a habit: he would defend God with the art of persuasion if he could.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

HIS CHARACTER

Don Guanella was always forgetful of himself. He never worried about the future and as a typical mountain boy went about his business without worrying where his next meal was coming from, what he would wear, nor bothering about his health.

He would say that the best day for the « work horse, » as he called the body, was when it went to bed tired and worn out as if it had been beaten all day. He himself slept little no matter how much he had worked during the day. He rose usually at 4:30 a.m. and would fast all day Friday.

He told his priests. «For us, it is enough to have a hard bed, a wooden chair, a table to write on, and a kneeler to pray on.»

External Simplicity

A group of women from Milan, seeing that his coat was green with age, gave him a new one. He put it on and thanked them heartily. Soon after, he came

into the house where he ran into a confrere who was lamenting the fact he didn't have an overcoat. Don Luigi told him to try on the one that had just been given to him. He saw that it fit, and gave it to him, and he went on wearing his own faded one.

Another time he had been given a gold watch which he exchanged with one of the priests for a silver one. However, thinking even this one too luxurious, he turned it in for a cheap metal one. And on another occasion, he arrived at Milan with his shoes so worn out, he couldn't go to any further. He accepted a pair from Monsignor Brera which proved to be much too large but which he wore nevertheless.

Instruments of Penance

One day, in the room where he rested when he wasn't well, they found a discipline still damp with fresh blood. He told them to put it back where they found it and tell no one about it.

A confrere once found a hair-shirt, and a discipline stained with blood. It was evident that he applied first to himself what he told others to do. « To the body (donkey) give a little hay, a lot of whacks, and continuous hard work. » He would

jokingly call his spiritual sons « little donkeys » so that they would realize that they should be content with little, suffer much and wear themselves out—all with a smile.

Once when he was sick, they gave him two mattresses for his bed. He made them take one away. « Give it to someone who needs it, » was his answer.

He practiced interior mortification in an heroic degree in order to control his natural irascibility which could be seen in the contraction of the nerves and in the reddening of his face. It was quite rare for anger to get the best of him, and when it did happen he would recover quickly after a few minutes and ask pardon. Quite often he would go to confess and many times to the priest whom he had offended.

Honorary Canon

He received, although at first very reluctantly, the nomination of Honorary Canon of the Cathedral of Como on November 13, 1909, as a particular sign of the benevolence of Monsignor Archi, not only to honor him, but as an official recognition of his work, by that authority which he could not say had been quick to approve his charities.

He approved heartily of an article in the *Life of the People* at Como weekly which said: « We won't call him Canon Guanella, but only, now and always Don Guanella. »

A Joke

Once during a conference, the speaker spent the whole time praising his works and telling how holy he was. Don Guanella turning to the priest next to him said jokingly: « From now on please have more respect for me, because our speaker says I'm holy. »

When any one would praise his works, he would always say: « It is not I, but He above. » « I am an instrument in the hands of the Lord. » When anyone would criticize him, his only answer was, « I deserve no better. »

In order to show his gratitude to his benefactors, he would say: « Please excuse me, I am only a poor farmer who doesn't know to give compliments or make pretty speeches. »



COMO :

Sanctuary: the mortuary chapel which contained the mortal remains of the Blessed from 1915 to 1964.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE
FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE EARTHQUAKE

On the 13th of January, 1915, all of Italy was shocked by the news of an earthquake which took a great number of lives, laid waste endless tracts of property in the region of Marsica, and left the people of entire towns without housing in the middle of winter. The hardest hit area was at Avezzano. The cries of the unfortunate were heard, and help poured in from all sides. In order to be of help, Don Guarella disregarded his seventy years and forgot the various illnesses which for a long time now had forced him to watch out for his health. He could hardly wait to rush to the aid of these people as he knew he could be of special use in caring for the abandoned children.

The following is an account of those memorable days by Don Aurelio Bacciarini who was his companion in the rescue work:

« Don Guanella wanted to go right to the heart of the disaster. There were many difficulties: The trains were few and far between: the cold was exceptional that year: in fact it was so cold that when we were finally able to say Mass at Avezzano, the wine would start to freeze in the chalice: and on top of it all, Don Guanella became ill. I would not have wanted him to undertake the trip considering his age and condition, but he wanted to, so he went.

His own charity and the sight of the disaster impelled him almost to the point of feverishness to help these poor people.

Having built a quasi-stable barracks building at Avezzano, he sent for the Sisters to care for the infants and children. The sacrifice was tremendous due both to the living conditions and the extreme cold of the season. »

« What Desolation »

Don Guanella himself wrote: « What ruin, what desolation. They say the ruin is greater than it was at Reggio and Messina some years back. Avezzano is completely destroyed, everyone who was there is dead: and within a few days everything was covered with dust which greatly hindered the recovery of the bodies. »

« At every corner, you can hear and see heart-breaking scenes: the newspapers tell only a few. »

« Great fissures in the ground can be seen along with trenches filled with water. Everyone is in great need. We are giving away everything we brought down with us. »

« We returned in a train with the victims. It was a sad spectacle of sick and wounded piled up in a state of great pain in the coaches. »

With great care he sent his priest and Sisters into the villages of Abruzzo so that they might care for the victims from the very beginning, urging them to spare no sacrifices or acts of charity that would be seen and noted by God Himself.

Beds Everywhere

One of the Sisters tells of the example of sacrifice which gave proof of Don Guanella's greatness of soul, « How great was his concern for the victims, and especially for the children. He would beg us to make room in every corner of the house in Rome for the, halls, attics, corridors, school, refectory everywhere, even to the giving up of our own beds.

The ambulances and trucks were arriving at night, and we were spreading mattresses down everywhere. He himself would go around and encour-

rage the Sisters, " How wonderful to be of help in such great suffering. " »

He wrote from Rome, « In our house here we have over two hundred victims of the earthquake: The children from two to six years are with the Sister at St. Pancratius. There are so many to care for that the patience of everyone is being tried. Tomorrow we will send the Sisters to receive and comfort the children who were saved from the quake but now must be saved from hunger, cold, and snow which is more than three feet deep in places. Don Bacciarini will also go to bring help to the aged who are likewise suffering from hunger and cold. We are trying our best to provide for them. »

Water, Snow and Frost

« The other day I was at Avezzano. What desolation! And moreover, water snow and intense cold!

The children cared for are about 300 and now we want to think about the care of the aged, because it seems that Providence invites us to do so. »

In the little magazine *Divine Providence* Don Guanella recalled the unforgettable days of charity and of heartaches, touching especially and with predilection on the innocent children saved. The Sisters who were the first to help in Avezzano, in the

rain, snow and frost, wrote: « Here we are well, and we have not time to sin. » They worked from early morning until late at night, never sure of being undisturbed in their short period of repose because of the cries and calls of the poor survivors.

Unhappy Children

« Love assuages suffering. The children soon hung on to the Sisters as if each one was a mother to them.

It was nice to see those little creatures share their fruit and goodies with each other, and smile back sadly at the smiles of the Sisters.

From visitors we learned that three little brothers were saved in the arms of their mother who defended them as does the hen gathering her chicks under her wings, breathing over them and giving them life, in the fashion of the compassionate peltican. Every now and then the mother called to her sons and they answered, and then finally the mother expired, and one son lived for days under the table or in the fireplace of the kitchen. Two boys told how on their way to school they were surprised by the earthquake—with water gushing out of the ground, and clouds of dust covering five surrounding villages,

which were reduced to ruins. These and other stories were the subjects of their sincere discussions. »
« The Pastor of St. Joseph's — Aurelio Bacciarini, whom we see tramping up mountains and down valleys of the ruined towns, sent a telegram about an hour before his arrival: " Prepare—I arrive tonight with 72 refugees. " We had to prepare supper for them and the priests and their aides hurried and placed mattresses in a schoolroom where they could rest. »

That page of charity was written by Don Guagnella, by his sons and Sisters with an unlimited spirit of sacrifice for the love of God.

CHAPTER THIRTY

AMONG THE ITALIANS IN AMERICA

In the middle of the last century, immigration became a serious problem for Italy. The abandonment of their country and the search for wealth, too, often caused by lack of work in their own country and low wages, led crowds from Northern Italy and others from the South, to France, Switzerland, Germany, South Africa, South America and finally to the United States.

Don Guanella remembered his own tears when as a child he had said farewell to relatives leaving for America, and with sorrow he many times urged them to discourage his dear mountaineers from emigrating, but to attach themselves to working their land.

« On Lives and Dies as an Animal »

An old friend of his school days, Monsignor Giambattista Scalabrini, having been made Bishop of Piacenza, took to heart the cause of the immi-

grants from whom he was receiving complaints over their material and spiritual conditions in the New World.

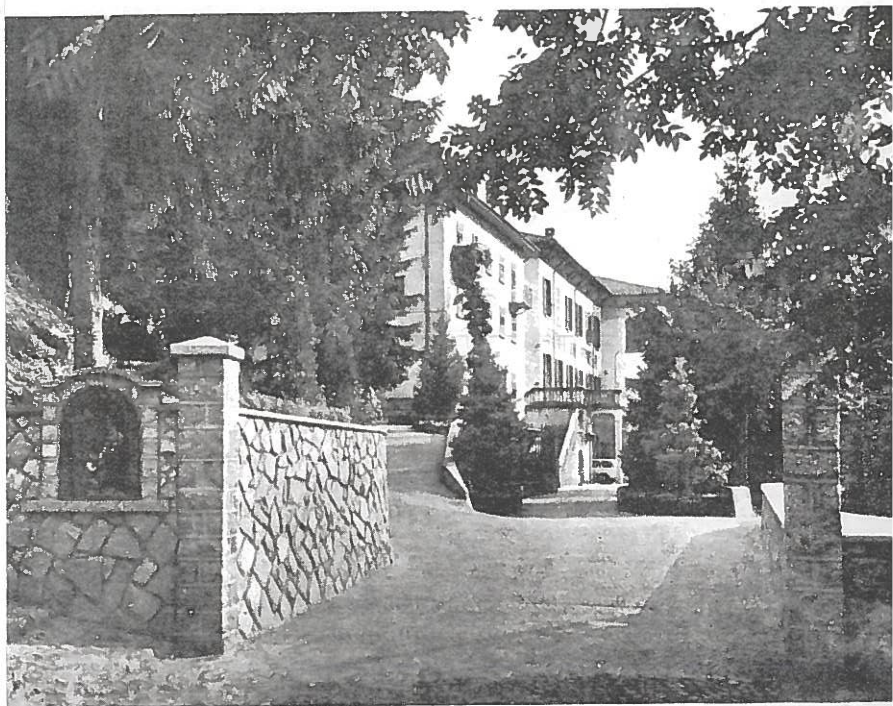
« Tell our Bishop », says one immigrant when writing home, « that we remember his advice, but ask him to pray for us and send us a priest so that we won't live and die like beasts. »

He urged the protection of the immigrants and asked for assistance for these people who were forming towns and enlarging cities. In Boston, the old Archbishop said that when he was a youngster, he knew all the Catholics in the city and that you could put them all in one room: now there were six hundred thousand!

With Youthful Ardor

In the field cleared by the Scalabrinis, Don Guannella, with a youthful ardor, offered to work. He was happy to cross the ocean with his Sisters to undertake a work which he considered holy, necessary, and urgent.

On the 17th of November, 1912, Don Luigi went to Rome with a group of pilgrims to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Scala-



CHIAVENNA

(Sondrio) :

the Major Seminary of the Servants
of Charity.

brini Fathers. They were all received in audience by the Pope. The Holy Father, when he saw Don Guanella, said jokingly, « You here too? Are you from Como? You are cosmopolitan. » It was after the audience that Don Luigi met with Father Vittorio Gregori, superior of the Scalabrini, and agreed to go to America and take a look at the country in which to plant the seed of his foundations. He had been thinking for a long time of answering the request of the Archbishop of Boston, to send into his huge Diocese, the Sisters to open a home for the afflicted Italians.

However, the trip to America had for a long time remained only in the planning stage, and became a reality only when he was persuaded by Father Gregori and encouraged by the Vicar of Christ.

Before leaving for America, St. Pius X. gave Don Luigi a splendid autograph of presentation and commendation with many praises for his virtues. When handing it to him he said jokingly, « Be careful not to become proud. » Don Guanella answered, « It is enough if they don't arrest me, and permit me to celebrate Holy Mass. »

Taking leave of his sorrowing sons he said, « I go because there's a call. »

By way of Piacenza, Torino, Paris, Le Havre, he embarked on the « *Provence* » and began his crossing. The sea was rough and he was obliged to re-

main in bed suffering that fastidious sea sickness. However, he passed his time in prayer and in conversation with Father Gregory.

Across the Ocean

From Boston he wrote on December 1st, «Weakness and timidity kept us from coming here ten years ago. We had the desire even before that but we had to wait for the call from on High.

Quickly, but with careful scrutiny, he saw the conditions of the Italians in America. He grew to know the problems and humiliations of the immigrants and quickly took to heart the problem of their religious and moral training.

These Italians who were forming towns and swelling the population of the great cities and being cut off from their ties at home moved him greatly, especially when they greeted him with: «You should have come a long time ago. »

All the Bishops welcomed him and blessed his work and his fellow Italians welcomed him with open arms.

After he visited the principal Dioceses and made arrangements for his first foundation, he wrote, «May Almighty God be praised for the good trip He has given me until now and for the good return

trip He will grant on February 8th, from New York, » During this trip home, he spent his entire time writing down his impressions of America.

He arrived at Naples the 22nd of February and after having been received in audience by the Pope on March 5th, he returned to Como to be with his priest.

« *Vita del Popolo* di Como, » on that occasion wrote: « Was it right for America to discover and know the great heart of that Italian priest? »

A Sacred Memory

Seeing the Mount of the Holy Sepulchre at Washington, Don Guanella decided to bring the fruition an idea brought from his pilgrimage in the Land, that is to reproduce in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Como, a faithful copy of the Holy Places in Palestine.

It was necessary to enlarge the Church and the corner stone was blessed on July 24, 1913. It was in this new sanctuary that he wished to reproduce the sacred places of Calvary, of the Holy Sepulchre, of Bethlehem and of Nazareth, so that the faithful might meditate more easily on the divine mercies of the Heart of Jesus.

He was able to finish only the Holy Sepulchre and Calvary behind the main altar under the big arch, and between the large windows, through which comes the proper light, suggesting the charm of peace. The rest which remains to be done is left to the piety of the faithful.

The Departure of the Small Group

Two Sisters from the Pius X. home were at once told to begin the study of English, others prepared in other houses. At Como, to a group that had come for Retreat, Don Guanella asked, « Who of you feels called for mission work in America? » Many answered but only four were chosen.

At last, the Sisters came together at Pompei, and at the shrine of Our Lady prayed fervently that their mission voyage would be successful.

Sister Rose Bertolini, the head of the small group, expressed the joy of all when she said, « We are all very happy for we can see in this trip the clear design of Providence. »

On the evening of May 3rd, 1913, six Daughters of Our Lady of Providence climbed aboard the « *Ivernia* » and said their farewell to Don Guanella who accompanied them. And as the ship sailed from the port, Don Guanella returned to pray for his cou-

rageous Daughters detached forever from his person but not from his heart, commended them all to the care of Our Lady, that she would watch over them and help them always.

« We Understand Each Other »

The first consoling news was not long in arriving and Don Guanella hurried to show the Holy Father. In an audience of September 17, 1913, St. Pius X. asked:

« And your work in America? »

« All is well, Your Holiness. »

« Who told you? »

« I have a letter from Father Gambera, Pastor of Addolorata Church Chicago, about the work of the Sisters, which I am happy to show Your Holiness. »

The Holy Father took the magazine *The Emigrant Italian in America* which contained the letter and said to Don Guanella: « You and I understand each other. » This was one of his last audience. In it Don Guanella had the supreme consolation that a priest could have on this earth, to hear from the Sovereign Pontiff whom he had faithfully served and defended all his life, say « You and I understand each other. »

In a Barren Field

In Addolorata parish in Chicago, the Sisters opened a kindergarten for three hundred children and a trade school. They had likewise been given work at the Italian parish of the Holy Rosary which was under the direction of the Scalabrini Fathers, and they also began their work for Italian children in the Incoronata parish.

Finally after great privations and hardships, their work took root in the American soil, so much so that eventually American girls gave themselves to the Congregation, which prepared itself to enter into greater and wider fields of activity.

Don Guanella, however, was not destined to see this development, although he had planted the first seeds. Yet, surely in some way he knew what was to come.

An Unanswered Letter

Sister Rose Bertolini had been trained by Don Guanella in the school of hardships and sacrifice. From superior of the Institute at San Pancrazio in Rome, she went to take care of the barns, from there to a difficult mission on the other side of the ocean.

In September of 1915, she sent a confidential letter regarding the direction of her spiritual life to

Don Luigi. She complained that he had given her permission to use the discipline only twice a week, when her strength was certainly capable of more. She asked for permission to perform greater penances even to the wearing of a hairshirt.

The letter remained opened, but unanswered on Don Guanella's desk. This was to be the great consolation of the last years of his life, to know that souls which he had formed to the religious life, although far from him, nevertheless were as he would want them to be.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE SETTING OF THE SUN

On August 20, 1914, six days after the outbreak of World War 1, St. Pius X. died, crushed by the sorrow caused by this war in which brother killed brother, and in which entire peoples were wiped out. He was succeeded by Benedict XV, whose almost entire pontificate was taken up with the sufferings caused by this war.

During a public audience, he asked a group of Religious « What order are you? »

« St. Mary of Divine Providence, Your Holiness, Congregation founded by Don Luigi Guanella, and we are stationed at St. Pius X. Home. »

« Is Don Luigi in Rome? »

« No, Your Holiness, he is in Como. »

« And when will he come to Rome? I would like to see this Don Guanella! »

A little later, some Servants of Charity presented themselves and Benedict XV. asked who they were.

« From St. Joseph's Parish, Your Holiness. »

« Ah, Don Guanella's priests. And where is Don Guanella? »

« In Como, Your Holiness. »

« Send him my special blessing. »

As soon as possible Don Guanella sought an audience with the Holy Father who received him most cordially and talked for a long time with him. Although we don't know what passed between them, we do have the words of the Pope who spoke to Don Bacciarini shortly after the audience: « I have spoken only once with Don Luigi, but it was enough to be edified by the simplicity of his manner and by his work. He left me with the impression that he is a man of God. »

A Great Heart During the War

The conditions created by the extension of the war to Italy, on the 24th of May, 1915, caused repercussions for the institutes of Don Guanella: priests were called to the army, aid was diminished, the number of needy cases increased, and the devaluation of the money caused misery.

The great afflictions and sufferings of the people stirred Don Luigi's heart. He put all of his houses at the disposal of the dispossessed families and war

orphans. A period of great activity and expansion followed. Paying no heed to his age and condition, he felt rejuvenated by the undertaking of this new work.

A Gold Medal

His great work during the war did not go unnoticed even by the civil authorities at Como. In fact, the Board of Deputies of Como presented him with a gold medal « in view of his outstanding philanthropic work » on the 2nd of July 1915.

« Our province, » said the report, « which has within its precincts institutes and kindergartens at Olmo, Pianello, Lario, Menaggio and Olonio St. Salvatore, cannot remain indifferent to the civil and profitable works of that valiant priest, who because of what he has done already, and his future aspirations, has a right and title to public gratitude. »

This great acknowledgement of his merits arrived in time to give Don Guanella a little satisfaction. The cycle of such great suffering closed with a happy ending.

A Great Feast?

The review *Divine Providence* announced the Golden Jubilee of Don Luigi's ordination: « Today, May 26, 1915, begins his fiftieth year as a priest. »

Everyone was looking forward to the celebration in all the houses: but he did not respond, it was as though he hadn't understood. He wrote to Father Gregory in Boston: « I feel worn out. »

Visiting the house in Berbenno, he said: « This is the last institution I shall open. »

« You will do much more to relieve the sufferings of the poor, » they told him.

« No, » he answered, « you will see, this is the last. »

An Unexpected Catastrophe

| On the 27th of September, in the House of Providence at Como, Don Luigi had eaten early so that he could take a scheduled trip around noontime when an old friend, the well-known artist Giacomo Mantegazza arrived.

Don Guanella went to greet him and put off his departure until later in the afternoon so that he might spend some time with his friend.

He was having a bite to eat with his friend when he felt a sharp pain in his left side which caused his arm to drop to his side and hang there uselessly. A stroke!

They hurried him to bed immediately and it looked as if there was hope of a quick recovery. However, during the night he called to the infirmarian who was assisting him. By the time he arrived, Don Luigi had suffered another, much more serious, that left his whole left side paralyzed.

Two doctors were summoned immediately, but gave little hope: complications had set in and his whole system was breaking down. The news went out that Don Luigi was dying.

« The charity of a sigh »

In these days of suffering, he was comforted by a letter from Cardinal Ferrari of Milan: « To our beloved friend and benefactor of so many of the poor, I send a special blessing from the depths of my heart: and if it would not be too much, I ask the charity of a sigh to the Lord for me, for the sigh of a saint is a precious thing. »

The Bishop of Como asked the priests and people for public prayers to be recited for him.

Don Guanella himself was calm and confident in the Providence of God. He was racked by pain in every member: and in these moments the devil sought to attack him with temptations to discouragement and even despair. A priest who was assisting

him in these last moments, would hear him whispering disconnected phrases: « Paradise... death... hell... strange words. I wish only to die. O Blessed Pius X. come to my aid. » He would ask for nothing, saying, « I do this only because I intend to do final penance for my sins. »

« I am not afraid. »

To those who visited him, he would say, « I am not afraid to die. »

He was suffering terribly, so much so that one day he said: « Sin must be a great evil if it has brought such terrible sufferings. »

From his bed, in these days, he would say over and over: « I want only to die. »

They would ask him, « Aren't you afraid to die, Don Luigi? » Shaking his head, he would say, « No, I am not afraid. »

The Eternal Reward

He had asked for the last anointing on the first day of his illness. They brought him Holy Communion frequently and often he would ask the priest to read to him from the Office of the day while he would listen.

Soon, he was in such a condition that he could only signify that he wanted Communion, and this was to be his last. His strength ebbed greatly. He prayed continuously with that little strength left to him.

Finally, as his Master before, he bowed his head and breathed forth his soul. The faithful Servant of Charity was dead. It was 2:15 on Sunday afternoon the 24th of October, 1915.

The Eternal Reward

He had asked for the last anointing on the first day of his illness. They brought him Holy Communion frequently and often he would ask the priest to read to him from the Office of the day while he would listen.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

« OTHERS WILL TAKE MY PLACE »

His remains were taken to the Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart where for three days crowds of people came to pay their respects.

Ecclesiastical and civil authorities, people from every walk of life came to offer their condolences to the Community. The Bishop of Como himself was among the first to come and impart his final blessing to the remains.

A telegram came from the Holy Father expressing his « profound sorrow » and promise of « special prayers for this elect soul of the pious and charitable founder. » In another telegram of condolence, Cardinal Ferrari called him: « a saint, a holy founder, and the glory of the Italian clergy. »

Cardinals, Bishop, religious superiors, practically all the newspaper men, deputies, benefactors, and notables from every part of Italy hastened to express their sorrow.

The Funeral

Don Luigi had expressed the desire in his last will that his funeral be « modest » and his sons bound themselves to follow his desire. But they were unable to quell the spontaneity, and impelling enthusiasm that arose to acclaim their Don Luigi.

The Bishop of Como wished that the funeral be celebrated at the Cathedral, the entire Chapter of the Cathedral was to assist: the city gave a beautiful coffin: and the police provided the escort. His Eminence Cardinal Ferrari came to pontificate at the Funeral Mass. The Bishops of Como, Lugano, Lodi, Adria and Rovigo were present.

From his own birthplace, from the towns where he had exercised his unlimited charity, from all the regions where the innumerable benefits of his work were felt came throngs of people. It is hardly an exaggeration to say no one could ever remember seeing a funeral cortege so long.

The « Servant of Charity »

The cortege wound its way slowly to the Cathedral for the Funeral Mass. Having celebrated the Mass and imparted the final blessing, Cardinal Ferrari



BARZA D'ISPRA

(Varese):

the Chapel of the Novitiate of the

mounted the pulpit to express his sentiments and those of all the people present.

« If in this moment I could ask this priest who rests here before us in the calm and peace of death and if he could answer me in his usual simple way I would ask him by what name he would like me to greet him for this last time on earth. I am sure he would answer " Servant of Charity. " Thus he liked to be called while alive: thus he called his fellow priests in their work. By this title which, as it were, shows us the true character of Don Guanella, I want today to set out before you not a funeral oration, but a modest eulogy of few words in praise of this good priest. »

After the final blessing, the remains were carried in triumph from the Cathedral to the cemetery where the mayor of Como said a final word in praise of « this great life of activity dedicated to charity, social work, and the elevation of people whom the world looked upon as derelicts. »

On November 28th, the government signed the decree that a tomb for the final resting place of Don Guanella be in his beloved sanctuary of the Sacred Heart.

The transfer of his remains from the cemetery to the sanctuary was held on the evening of the 4th of December in a moving ceremony. When the procession drew close to the church, Don Aurelio Bac-

ciarini greeted the father who had come again among his children and who would no longer leave them orphans. The remains were then carried by the priests to the tomb near the sanctuary where, on April 11, 1916, a marble slab was placed bearing only the simple notice: Don Luigi Guanella.

« I am only a sentry »

« What will happen to the houses of Don Guanella when he dies? » many of his critics used to ask.

And to those who did ask him directly, Don Luigi used to answer: « He will die bidding farewell to this earth to which his heart has never been attached, and saying farewell to his children whom he knows will carry on much better the work he has begun. These works are from God Himself. I am only a sentry on guard. When the General calls me He will send someone else to take my place, someone who will be much better than I. »

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE GROWTH OF THE INSTITUTES

The Servants of Charity

Following the death of the Venerable Founder, it was necessary to choose the person who would come after him. Providence provided, in a decree from the Sacred Congregation of Religious dated November 12, 1915, a worthy successor in the person of Don Aurelio Bacciarini, a man of great virtue with a great spirit of sacrifice. He was only beginning his new work, when news came to disturb this large family of Don Luigi Guanella: Benedict XV. had named Don Bacciarini a Bishop and administrator of the Diocese of Lugano, in Switzerland. In this hour of trial, it would seem Don Luigi won a special grace from Heaven; Don Bacciarini was consecrated a Bishop, but allowed temporarily, to remain as Superior General and at the same time administer his important Diocese.

He was able to continue giving his needed help to His Community until 1924, when he was no longer able to bear the burden of both tasks and had to turn exclusively to the care of his flock at Lugano. He continued however to give assistance, comforting counsel and dignity to his beloved Congregation until his holy death on the 27th of June 1935.

The responsibility of General Superior was taken up by Don Leonardo Mazzucchi, Don Guanella himself had baptized Don Leonardo, assisted his father in his last moments, and as Godfather in Confirmation, he guided his footsteps in the way of his vocation; and as one of the first members of this new Community, had always kept him close to himself, witness of his sorrows. Don Leonardo knew better than anyone else his spirit, his virtues, his secrets. He devoted himself to perpetuating the memory of Father Guanella, presenting us with the, first extensive biography, which had entailed the gathering of numerous writings and written expression of the spirit of the Father and the promotion of it into every area of the life of the Congregation.

He was succeeded in 1946 by Don Luigi Alippi who governed until the Chapter of 1958. The Congregation gratefully recognizes his untiring efforts in furthering extensively the work in Italy and particularly in Latin America.

Since 1958, Don Carlo De Ambroggi has followed faithfully the activities of his predecessors designed to bring the Congregation of Don Guanella an increase in « merit and number. »

Thus, by continuing the effort toward more fruitful development, eager always for the formation of more numerous and better prepared Servants of Charity, the various Superiors General with their religious sons have been able to give vitality to their works of zeal. In gratitude they hereby correspond to the confidence so generously given them by Church authority while serving to preserve in good esteem the form and works which bear the name of their Venerable Founder.

The list of the numerous Houses of the Sons and Daughters of Don Guanella, indicate the ever flowing charitable effort undertaken solely for the greater glory of God and the relief, comfort and salvation of many souls. The blessings evoked by Don Guanella in his lifetime for his beloved poor continue to fall today upon his choice favorites; the poor, unfortunate, all varieties of underprivileged persons whom the Founder envisioned as participants of his program of charity.

The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence

After the death of the Founder, Mother Marcelina Bosatta governed effectively the promising growing Congregation for many years.

As usual in the works of God, trials and difficulties appeared, but the love for the Founder continued to inspire the course of action. Prayerful recourse brought solutions which encouraged this noble coworker in her daily struggle. As the work, grew and prospered, it bore the mark of heavenly blessings.

Mother Marcellina's energy was now becoming drained by advancing age and by years of ceaseless work. It was time, she said, to pass the care of the Congregation to another. Thus Sister Rosa Colombo, a soul of deep piety and sacrifice, with great love for her Daughters and the poor, governed from 1925 until 1937, and was succeeded by Sister Apollonia Bistoletti in 1937, who remained in office until 1952. Both Sister Rosa and Sister Apollonia faithfully guarded the spirit of their Founder; transmitting his ideals to the ever increasing number of vocations, with which God favored the Institute. The eagerness and dedication of the numerous hearts and hands made possible the extending of the works of charity to meet the ever existing needs of Guanellass' sister and suffering.

In this early period of further expansion, the Congregation had the presence, the prayers and the counsel of Mother Marcellina, who although very advanced in years found an outlet for her zeal particularly in prayer close to the tomb of Father Guanella where she remained like a faithful lamp aglow with his spirit. She was called by her Lord on February 4th, 1934, in the 86th year of her life.

Her successors, especially Mother Apollonia experienced the painful deprivations of the war years with the concomitant increase of needy persons presenting every variety of destitution. Despite the inevitable lack of communication set up by war zones, and the agony of not being able to assist each other as formerly, the Houses of the Congregation, at the close of this period, found great cause for rejoicing in the extraordinary providential assistance that had been theirs under the bombings and restrictions.

Mother Rosa Colombo entered the light of beautiful paradise on October 12, 1956. Other « good and faithful » servants remained but gradually are departing from the earthly ranks of the first followers of Father Guanella, leaving us also their heritage of joy and opportunities for meriting from a life hidden in charity with Christ.

Since 1952 Mother Angela Cettini has been Superior General, uniting to her special gifts of mind and heart, an extensive experience gained during her

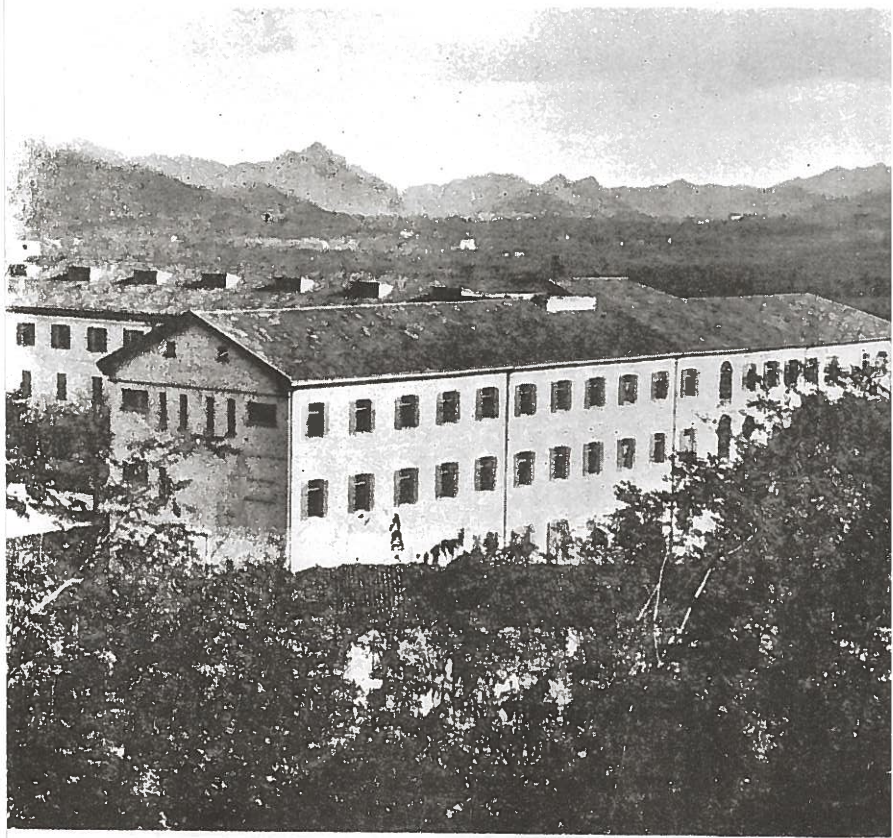
long residence in the United States. With her vision and resolute action, she has transplanted her Congregation into the vast field of labor in Brazil in 1961. With her characteristic prudence and energy and blessed by God's grace, she has been able to set in motion not only missions to aid the poor in Guannellian fashion, but to establish a novitiate for native vocations. The goodness of the people, especially youth, has responded so that the seed has burst already into healthy growth.

Heirs of Saints

We can say then; that the two Congregations, the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, are the heirs to a holy patrimony made up of the examples and virtues of hidden yet outstanding Priests, Brothers and Sisters, who from Heaven protect and encourage the living members in the advance of the present spiritual and social mission entrusted to them.

How would it be possible not to revere them? We cannot fail them, recalling that « we are the children of saints. »

« Behold the heredity of the Lord, the children... » Near to the Eternal Divine Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Priests, Brothers and Sisters



ANZANO DEL PARCO

(Como) :

the Minor Seminary of the Servants of
Charity.

rejoice as they enter their perpetual Feast which has no evening, knows no sunset. To them we raise our eyes. Their lives inspire our works!

May our Venerable Founder, with the Servant of God, Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, the Servant of God, Sister Clara Bosatta, and the elect company of saintly friends who look down from on high, secure for us the graces which will assist this family of Father Guanella, still pilgrims on earth, to be faithful each day to his true spirit.

The Wish of Cardinal Ferrari

After the funeral, Cardinal Ferrari went to the House of the Servants of Charity to tell them, « You have a Protector in Paradise inasmuch as his life was filled with love of God and love of the poor. If he has not gone to Paradise, who could expect to go? » To the Sisters, he said, « You have a Saint for a Founder. »

He also wrote, « It seems to me that holy priest is on his way to the honors of the altar. » It was Cardinal Ferrari who first expressed to the Superior General Don Aurelio Bacciarini; the

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

« TOWARD HIS GLORY »

When Benedict XV. heard that Don Luigi was dying, he sent his blessing and was heard to say, « A Saint is dying. »

The Wish of Cardinal Ferrari

After the funeral, Cardinal Ferrari went to the House of the Servants of Charity to tell them, « You have a Protector in Paradise inasmuch as his life was filled with love of God and love of the poor. If he has not gone to Paradise, who could expect to go? »

To the Sisters, he said, « You have a Saint for a Founder. »

He also wrote, « It seems to me that holy priest is on his way to the honors of the altar. »

It was Cardinal Ferrari who first expressed to the Superior General Don Aurelio Bacciarini; the

desire to see the informative process started for the beatification of Don Luigi Guanella.

The publication of new facts; of his life added to the lustre of his holiness and invited confidence in his intercession with God. Numerous graces were reported to have been obtained, thus confirming the confidence of the faithful in the benefactor they had trusted upon earth but who even now appeared more powerful and willing to assist them in their trials of life.

Pilgrims came in crowds to his tomb in the Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart in Como. Among them was Don Orione, another Founder whose love of Divine Providence had drawn into a magnificent spiritual friendship during life, only to increase in intensity after death so that he was seen to pray for hours at Don Guanella's tomb.

The Canonical Processes of Beatification

After the expressed wish of Cardinal Ferrari, upon advice of high ecclesiastical authority, the desire of the people, the love of his religious family, all of whom were convinced of the holiness of Don Guanella; the Diocesan Tribunal of Como set up a commission in September 1921 thereby beginning

the informative process of the Church which looks into the sanctity of life, virtues, and miracles attributed to the intercession of the candidate for sainthood.

In November 1923, Eugene Cardinal Tosi set up a special Ecclesiastical Tribune in Milan also, to effect more easily and quickly the gathering of needed testimony.

Progress led to the presentation of the facts to the Sacred Congregation of Rites whose approval led to the introduction of the Cause on March 15, 1939.

At Como, on June 27, 1940, the Apostolic Process was begun which ended October 10, 1941. The closing of the process coincided with the prescribed canonical recognition of the venerable remains by the Apostolic Tribune, replacing them in the same tomb and sealing same.

In the year 1942, Apostolic Tribunes were set up in Milan, Como, Vittorio, Venice, for the examination of other miracles attributed to the Servant of God and verified within the boundaries of said Dioceses. A Decree from the Sacred Congregation was given on these miracles on April 13, 1945. The ground was thus prepared to proceed to the discussion regarding the heroic virtues.

The Congregation called Pre-Preparatory took place March 13, 1956, and that called Preparatory followed on April 28, 1959.

Finally on March 6, 1962 in the august presence of the Holy Father, Pope John XXIII., of holy memory, the Congregation called « General » at this step, took place, in which His Eminence Clement Cardinal Micara, Ponente of the Cause and Protector of the Congregations founded by the Servant of God, proposed the « doubt » according to the expression of the Rites, if the Servant of God had exercised in an heroic manner, the Theological and Cardinal Virtues and others included in them. All present gave their vote. Nevertheless, according to the Prassi (method), the Holy Father wished to consider all of this further in the light of fervent prayer before pronouncing his final judgment.

In fact, the following April 8th, in the presence of His Eminence Arcadia Cardinal Larraona, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Clement Cardinal Micara, Ponente and Relator of the Cause, and of the Most Reverend Father Ferdinand Antonelli, General Promotor of the Faith, as well as other persons designated for such acts, this was declared: « Be it known that the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards God and towards neighbor, as well as the Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance and those annexed to them have been exercised by the Venerable Luigi Guanella in an heroic degree and to the full effect of the aim treated. »

In that manner His Holiness John XXIII. conferred the title of Venerable upon the humble priest which indicated a further decisive step toward his awaited glorification.

On other different dates, further formal hearings before prescribed Congregations have been presented with the results of the careful examination of miracles attributed to the intercession of the Venerable one. Their favorable acceptance brings the Cause near to the desired happy ending.

In fact, the following April 8th, in the presence of His Eminence Arcadio Cardinal Larraona, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Clement Cardinal Miara, Pontific and Relator of the Cause, and of the Most Reverend Father Ferdinand Antoni, General Promotor of the Faith, as well as other persons designated for such acts, this was declared: « Be it known that the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards God and towards neighbor, as well as the Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance and those annexed to them have been exercised by the Venerable Luigi Guzzella in an heroic degree and to the full effect of the aim treated. »

APPENDICE

THE EDUCATIONAL HOUSES OF THE D. GUANELLA FOUNDATION

COMO - The Mother House of the Congregation of the Servants of Charity. This is the seat of the General Superior and the General Council of the Congregation. Built by the Blessed Luigi, who died there on October 24, 1915, it preserves his room and the still living memories of his work. The body of the Blessed one rests in the Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart, founded by him and blessed by the Servant of God, Cardinal Andrea Ferrari. All the charitable institutions are to be found here, from elementary and secondary schools to handicraft departments — carpentry and printing — and to a home for old persons in need or abandoned.

Some years ago, the House was enlarged and structurally renewed, while the spirit of the Blessed Luigi Guanella was always jealously preserved.

CHIAVENNA (Sondrio) - This is the House where the young clerics of the Congregation carry on their theological studies and give the final touches to their priestly and religious training. At the awe-inspiring sight of the mountains, covered with snow in winter and with verdure in summer, they grow accustomed to feeling the presence of God in nature and in things; the surroundings where the powerful personality of the Blessed Luigi Guanella unfolded and grew, inspire them to imbue themselves with the same spirit of charity and strength, to give themselves to others, to lighten other peoples' suffering while hiding their own, and to lead souls to God by their goodness, their example and their preaching.

BARZA D'ISPRA (Varese) - As if to make amends for the evil exalted in the novels written here by Guido da Verona, the beautiful villa today houses the Novitiate and the courses in Philosophy of the Servants of Charity. Our young people however, do not only live on the classics, but also breathe the modern air of atomic science: which they know how to appreciate: almost next door to the Institute in fact we could see growing, stone by stone, I might almost have said, atom by atom, the Centre of Atomic Studies of Ispra. Science and faith form an inseparable double concept, if it be true — as indeed

it is — that each of them, if rightly interpreted, cannot fail to lead to the sole Creator of all, to God who is Love.

ANZANO del PARCO (Como) - On the road leading from Como to Bergamo, in the green Brianza, rises this House which is the Lower Seminary of the Congregation for Northern Italy, where foregather the boys who feel the impulse of a divine call, listen to it, think on it and prepare themselves with a seriousness which at their age is almost moving, to more binding steps. In spite of their ordered lives, they are bursting with cheerfulness, their recreations are boisterous and noisy, and the dignity of the religious functions is assured by the choral singing, while good theatre performances serve to entertain and at the same time to educate.

ROME (Via Aurelia Antica) - The Don Guanella Foundation - This House has been called the Little Cottolengo of Rome, because the cream of charity is gathered there. In the footsteps of the Blessed Luigi Guanella, D. Mauro Mastropasqua has built up this Old People's Home which welcomes old people needing help and those whom the rare Christian charity of the Blessed wants us to call « the Good Children. » Next door, though in quite sepa-

rate departments, rises the Lower Seminary of the Servants of Charity for the Centre of Southern Italy. These boys, who have chosen to serve God in the poor, breathe the universality of the Church as it is encountered in Rome, where struggles and victories alternated during the centuries, where every stone, every corner speaks of saints and martyrs, where the Pope's white vestment is the symbol and assurance of perennial duration, where the majestic dome of St. Peter's repeats the divine promise: «The gates of hell shall not prevail ».

Here they learn, in combination with Latin and mathematics, to « pray » and to « suffer », and to be sure that « he who gives to the poor, shall receive from God ».

ROME (Via Aurelia Antica) - The Don Guannello Foundation - This House has been called the Little Cottolengo of Rome, because the cream of charity is gathered there. In the footsteps of the Blessed Luigi Guannello, D. Mauro Mastropasqua has built up this Old People's Home which welcomes old people needing help and those whom the rare Christian charity of the Blessed wants us to call « the Good Children. » Next door, through in quite sepa-