

Sophie Thérèse de Soubiran La Louvière was born in France in 1835. Even as a child she was drawn to the religious life and prayed for a vocation. When she was older she wanted to be a Carmelite, but her uncle, Canon de Soubiran, who strikes one as a somewhat tiresome man, although we are assured by the writer that he was 'a very zealous priest', set his face against it. He wanted his niece to help him in his pet scheme of founding a *béguinage* in France on the model of those in Belgium. Sophie was not attracted to the idea, but at last, persuaded that it must be God's will for her, she gave in, and her uncle had his way. In due time they founded the *béguinage*, and Sophie was appointed Superior at the age of 21, and was known as Mother Marie Thérèse. But it did not satisfy her. The life in a *béguinage* is neither wholly religious nor wholly secular. It seemed to Mother Marie Thérèse that she was neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring (the French have doubtless a more elegant way of expressing it), and eventually she and those of her companions who felt as she did decided that they must leave the *béguinage* and become real nuns. It ended in the foundation of the Society of Marie Auxiliatrice, a community bound by the vows of religion, whose lives were given up to prayer and good works, chiefly for the children of the poor, for orphans, and for working girls living away from their homes in the industrial cities.

The first foundation was at Toulouse. Mother Marie Thérèse had been appointed Superior-General. There were many vocations. Father Hoare writes that 'generous souls were attracted by this life of prayer and apostle-ship. Moreover, Mother Marie Thérèse had the gift of winning souls; there was something magnetic about her personality'. All went well. But it is not in success that saints are formed. Mother Marie Thérèse had offered herself to God, knowing that she would have to bear the cross. Among those who came to join the Society was a 'middle-aged lady, well connected, of distinguished bearing'. She was professed under the name of Sister Marie François. Her charm of manner and her intelligence captivated the Superior-General, who nominated her as the Mother Assistant. The contrast between the two women is well brought out in a few words: Mother Marie Thérèse, holy and humble; Mother Marie François, 'domineering, unstable, and ambitious'.

The rest of the story should be read in Father Hoare's little book. It is worth reading. Besides giving us the life of Blessed Marie Thérèse and the heroic suffering of her latter years, we have at the end a clear summary of the Rule of Life, the spirit, and the work of the Society of Marie Auxiliatrice, with a few words about their London foundations, one of which suffered badly in the late war. And the little book only costs 6d. FF.R.

ADDENDUM

In the January issue a line was omitted at the foot of page 198. It should read: 'This Langland insisted upon particularly for the lax clergy who constructed the Church, but who, like the carpenters who constructed Noah's ark, perish in the deluge of their own sins'.