The PEACEMAKER

★ In 1917, the Mother of God appeared at Fatima, where Nuno had fought his battles, and repeated what Nuno had so often said: *"The Blessed Virgin can save the world."*

★ Is it wrong to have fought in war? Are the inward scars of war beyond healing? Or is there some simple truth that turns these scars to badges of glory and lifts the soul as sheerly to God as martyrdom . . . to become a joy forever?

★ Blessed Nuno Alvarez Pereira was a peacemaker who went to war, with all the horror that war could bring. And came back a saint.

★ Here is his life: flesh and blood truth to heal those inward scars of war which nothing but the truth can heal. Here is real hope for the world. Here is the message of Our Lady of Fatima!

JOHN MATHIAS HAFFERT

The Peacemaker Who Went To War

The Life of
Blessed Nun'Alvarez Pereira,
PRECURSOR
OF
OUR LADY OF FATIMA

Principally from writings by
ELISEO BATTAGLIA
and the
V. REV. GABRIEL N. PAUSBACK, O. Carm.

by
JOHN MATHIAS HAFFERT

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Bishop of Camden

While publishing this present volume merely as an historical record, in the use of the words "saint", "miracle", etc., we wish to conform to all the decrees of Pope Urban VIII (March 13, 1625, June 5, 1631).

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PREFACE

LONG BEFORE World War II, when he was a student in Rome, the Very Reverend Gabriel N. Pausback, since become Assistant General in his venerable Order of Carmelites, translated Eliseo Battaglia's biography of Blessed Nuno, based on the famous Portuguese work by Oliveira.

During the years that followed, Blessed Nuno's life and message came to have international appeal and significance. Portugal remained neutral through the great war that Our Lady foretold at Fatima. Interest in Portugal, in Blessed Nuno, and especially in the 1917 apparitions at Fatima, grew apace. So Father Gabriel poured over his translation, added to it, asked many persons to read and comment on it, and prayed to Blessed Nuno that it would one day be of some use. Finally, just before departing on a special mission to Australia, in 1943, he left the material for this book. Later he went to Portugal, where he now labors on the last steps to Nuno's canonization.

We have adhered very much to the original, and

the very style sometimes betrays it. We have preferred not to elaborate much on the known facts because once the reader has plunged into the book the facts hold their own allure.

However, there is so much that the imagination can legitimately create—about the person of Nuno, about his colorful parents, about all the persons that move through the pages from Cleopatra-like Leonora Telles to the gentle Lady Irene—that the reader will gain so much more from the book as he lets his fancy run with it. It bears the buds of high spiritual as well as material adventure.

We pray that the Holy Constable, the Saint in Uniform, the Peacemaker who went to War, the Precursor of Fatima with his panacea of Rosary and Scapular, will persuade the reader in the words of His Lady at Fatima: "Have courage, there will be peace!"

JOHN M. HAFFERT.

1

THIRTEEN YEARS

DON NUNO ALVAREZ PEREIRA went to war, in defense of his country. He fought, he killed, he received many decorations. He was wounded, but he was "lucky" enough to come home.

Five hundred years after he fought his battles, the Blessed Virgin made what was perhaps Her most spectacular appearance on earth—Her appearance on October 13, 1917, at Fatima, on the very ground on which Nuno fought and holding in Her hands the very symbols under which Nuno led his troops in that place, five hundred years before.

This amazing Nuno—Our Lady's Knight—led a life bridging centuries, stranger than fiction, fraught with the mystery of war and evil, gold-touched by the sun of the promise made in 1917 by Our Lady at Fatima: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph and there will be peace."

When we look at the soldier in the foxhole,

the boy languishing in a prison camp with memory peopled by murderous horrors, the boy coming home from battle thin and shaken and unseasonably aged, we see—there in his perplexed, heavy eyes—the horrible meaning of war.

Must it not be thus in the eyes of the men who have carried the sword, whether out of conviction or force of circumstances, from generation to generation?

To them, in a special way, does Blessed Nuno Alvarez Pereira belong. Like them he bears upon the freedom of the world.

i

Nuno began life with a handicap. He was born out of wedlock.

He was the son of one of the most important men in Portugal: Don Alvaro Conçalves Pereira, Master of the Knights of Saint John and Prior of Crate (the largest province in the kingdom).

His mother was Lady Irene Conçalves do Carvalhal, whom Don Alvaro had found so ravishing that he took her to his castle, at Bombjardin, in violation of his vows in the Knights of Saint John.

Neither Lady Irene nor Don Alvaro were truly wicked. Don Alvaro was very forceful, very attractive, decorated many times for valor in battle, confidant of the king, and Lady Irene was very much

in love. Don Alvaro had descended from the Mendo line, with centuries of full strain nobility behind him. His family had come to Spain in the person of the unhappy King Desiderius, who was forced to leave Italy in the eighth century. The Lombard blood, mingled with the Castilian, flowed through Don Alvaro in the fierceness of a choleric temperament.

It is somewhat difficult, according to present day standards, to understand the moral actions of many apparently good people of the fourteenth century, like Don Alvaro—a great nobleman and man of letters—who had seven children, all of whom had to be legitimatized.

We can only say that immorality was a part of the times and that, even so, faith was not dead. Many virtues were practiced to an eminent degree. And repentance for sins against the flesh was often just as public as the offense. To judge according to our present day standards would be wrong, and this is especially evident when we meet the memory of Lady Irene.

This great lady, so very much in love, knew well that there was hardly a lady in Portugal who would not have changed places with her. The only reason Don Alvaro could not marry was because of his vows in the Knights of Saint John, She knew their relationship was wrong. Yet, if there is an apology for her, it is that weak though she was at the time,

later she expiated her sin by almost forty years of exemplary penance—by abstaining from meat and wine, by giving generous alms and observing rigorous fasts.

And God, bringing good out of evil, blessed her with Nuno.

ii

Born in the great feudal castle of his father, in an atmosphere of wealth and power, in an era of dissolution, with the government of the Church itself at one of the worst passes in history, a child of sin, we find the baby boy who would one day be beatified, to whom millions of people would pray, through whose intercession miracles would be wrought. We find a study in the wonder of devotion to the Mother of God—which makes saints always, anywhere.

During his boyhood, Nuno saw much of his father, but he spent most of his time with Lady Irene. From her he drew a sense of truth, and love for the Blessed Virgin; from his father he drew a longing to grow up and become a great knight.

Despite their sin, both Don Alvaro and his Lady were held in high esteem by the people. The qualities of Don Alvaro as a soldier and leader were such as to bring upon him the richest priorate in the kingdom. And Lady Irene was so deep-souled, so

aesthetic, so well-read, prudent, intelligent, spiritually and physically attractive, that the King and Queen later chose this same Lady Irene to be the governess of the royal children.

Don Alvaro's conversation, at least in the presence of Nuno, was almost wholly of Portugal's will to be a nation. The governor told the boy of his own experiences in battle. He was often bitter in his condemnation of the Castilians. "They think themselves superior," he said thickly and loudly at one of the Bombjardin (his castle) banquets, "but some day they shall find that we are more than their equals!".

For all his courage, Don Alvaro was not willing to say that things would be going better for Portugal, and the chances for good relations with Castile would be much improved, if things were not so bad at the court in Lisbon—so bad that he himself, Don Alvaro, the second most powerful man in all that unhappy and Castile-dominated realm, hardly ever visited the King and Queen. "Some day a great leader will come," he said, "and the people of Portugal shall be free, independent of Castile, a real kingdom, a nation unto herself!"

Nuno, small boy, proud of his great father, wanted to be that leader.

Lady Irene began, when Nuno was scarcely four, to counter the clanking of armor and the war cries

in mighty Bombjardin by teaching the boy rules of etiquette and the elements of counting, of reading, of speech. But no sooner had the boy pierced the mystery of the alphabet—which he did very readily —than his favorite book became the legend of King Arthur and the Round Table.

Living in a castle, the son of a great knight, with knights in armor constantly entering and leaving Bombjardin on business with his father, it was not difficult for little Nuno's imagination to transport the Arthurian legend right into his own castle and to feel that it was quite real, quite at hand.

"I want to be Sir Galahad," he often repeated. There was such a determined, undeniable command in his manly little face that Lady Irene half suspected that it was more than a childish dream.

Don Alvaro was delighted. He encouraged this tendency in the boy to such extent that he invited heroes of the current sporadic fighting with the Castilians to come to Bombjardin, and he talked to Nun'Alvarez about the details of their accomplishments. "Some day, Nuno," he said, "there will be a great war with Castile for the independence of Portugal, and then we will need Sir Galahad."

iii

We are deliberately skimming over Nuno's boyhood because of the full adventures ahead; more-

over, little of importance has been recorded other than the above.

Nuno was a rather dark-skinned boy, of surprisingly slight stature, with the tapering nose of an artist, and great, ingenuous dark eyes. Even in a beggar's garb he would have appeared of noble birth. He was very sensitive, but not shy. He was talkative and had such a vivid imagination that sometimes he was accused of telling a lie when he was merely telling something that he had imagined so vividly as to believe real. And among his brothers, even the older ones, he always had a very commanding suggestion as to what they should play, and what positions each one would take in play.

In later years, the love that obtained among these brothers showed itself to be great, in three instances, to the point of tragedy.

The binding force among them was their mother, Lady Irene. In their love for her they were of one heart.

Nuno, being younger, saw one brother after the other go to serve as a page at the royal court in Lisbon in anticipation of being knighted by the King and Queen, while he remained behind.

Towards his thirteenth year, when all his older brothers had gone to court, he felt very much alone at Bombjardin. Even though Lady Irene told him that life was full of parting, and that God made us

for an eternal life where partings ceased, his rides and mock battles seemed empty without Peter and Ferdinand and Diego.

"Let me go to Lisbon, too, father," he begged. "I can ride and carry the lance as well as Diego!"

"Oh ho!" the governor laughed. "Why, Diego is a soldier now!"

But he tempered his jest with a pleased smile and he roundly patted Nuno's back.

Young Sir Galahad was persistent. His little jaw was set. An even greater degree of manliness seemed to square into his boyish shoulders. Hardly a day passed on which he did not try to demonstrate his soldiering ability, or take solemn part in conversations with visiting knights about strategy, or about battles of history—conversations that would have been laughable except that Nuno amazed many an old soldier with his knowledge. It is said that he spent every waking hour at books, or at exercises of arms. He was perfectly normal in every respect, yet so intelligent, and of such tenacious memory, that he held in his mind almost all that he read, and could pierce through a problem with sometimes more than adult ingenuity. Everyone marveled at him.

"Please take me to court, father," he kept begging. "I can help Diego."

But his father waited until Nuno was fully thir-

teen years old and then, unable any longer to withstand his son's pleading, and anxious himself to see how the war with Castile was going, Don Alvaro ordered his knights to take to the saddle.

He was taking Nuno to court.

iv

King Ferdinand and Queen Leonora were holding court in Santarem, whither they had been driven from Lisbon. Their war against the Castilians was going badly. It had been like a feud between a father and son, the father being Castile and the son being Portugal. In the past, Castile had never sent very great forces against her "son," and the wars usually ended with some extra taxes on Portugal, some extra curtailment on the power of the "King"—who was but a glorified governor, subject to the King of Castile.

One of the reasons things went badly for Portugal was the country's queen. Her heart was not in the war. It was only in her own pleasure. Secretly, she was even willing to betray her husband to the Castilians if that would have served her purpose. She imagined herself another Cleopatra. She was of Spanish blood, very beautiful—even voluptuous—with no scruples and few virtues. The King had made her his bride after much open scandal, even

though she was the wife of another man. The people of Portugal, generally, despised her.

Don Alvaro was one of those averse to the queen because of her scandalous life, and also because of the intrigues by which she had ascended the throne and utterly dominated her royal husband. It was largely disgust of her that kept him away from court unless he had to go. However, Don Alvaro was not averse to the King, himself. He and Ferdinand were good friends.

Even though travel was such in those days that even 200 years later a trip in the United States from Plymouth Rock to Maryland was as long as a trip by boat today to Australia, Don Alvaro wanted his little son to go to the court and realize the ambition of knighthood. He wanted, too, as we have said, to see at first hand how the battle was going, and to pay his respects to Ferdinand.

Thus, in the year 1373, the great Don Alvaro Conçalves Pereira, with his vast retinue of servants and attendants, swept on horseback into Santarem. And at his side, straight and proud in the saddle, rode Nuno, his son.

v

Soon after arriving in Santarem, after presenting himself to the King and Queen, Don Alvaro permitted Nuno and his brother, Diego—whom Nuno had

embraced with no little exuberance—*to reconnoiter* the surrounding country and report to him on the strength of the Castilian forces.

It was the first time Nuno had ever faced a real enemy.

Though he had ridden on many imaginary encounters in Bombjardin in the company of his instructors, he felt elated to be permitted to ride alone now, "for real," with Diego.

As they galloped cautiously over the countryside, experienced Diego showed his acquired manliness at every turn, taking advantage of all natural cover, sometimes dismounting to make observations from a tree, or to hide in the brush on a knoll.

Nuno felt his first thrill of the soldier-life.

On the way back, enemy *scouts* cut their *route*.

Seeing the danger, Diego cried: "We will have to make a run for it over this open field!"

They broke from cover in the face of the enemy.

Nuno rode at a masterful gallop, his impassive and proud face giving no sign whatever of perturbation. Meanwhile, he observed—eyes calm, alert, shrewd—estimating whatever could help the enemy. He seemed, though a mere boy permitted the thrill of this expedition by an indulgent and perhaps not too prudent father, to be an experienced soldier.

When the two brothers returned to the palace

the sovereigns were tranquilly eating dinner. Nuno, with a sense of accomplishment that fairly shone from his youthful face, recounted every particular of the expedition frankly and with amazing detail. He concluded with the words:

"The Castilians are many, but badly ordered and little watchful. With a few brave men of ours and a good captain, I believe that they could be easily routed."

Don Alvaro looked as though he were about to burst with pride.

The Queen had paused in her meal. She took in the flashing eyes, the youthful figure, and caught the sweet blend of poise and modesty that characterized the amazing speech.

When Nuno finished, she said, "Well done!" and as she smiled, Nuno thought she must indeed be, as he had heard, the most beautiful woman in the world.

Then bending towards the King, the sovereign lady whispered in her husband's ear. The King shrugged and said: "Do as you please, my Lady."

Then, to the amazement of all—on that first day of Nuno's arrival in Santarem and on the day of his very first soldier-experience—the Queen of the realm straightened and said: *"I shall make you my knight."*

The expression on Nuno's face must have been as full of surprise as a cloud-banked sky at the sud-

den appearance of the sun, his mouth open, his great dark eyes wider and brighter than ever.

The Queen, seeing the boy's emotion, gestured for him to approach.

She placed her hand impulsively on his shoulder and said: "I shall arm you myself, as soon as the ceremony can be performed."

vi

A few days later the ceremony was solemnly performed in the palace of Santarem. It had been delayed because they could find no armor that would fit a boy so slight. And when the search had proved vain, and it was thought that a special suit of armor would have to be made for the occasion, the Queen remembered the slight stature of a youth only two years older than Nuno who had been knighted some time before. The name of this youth—a name which we shall hear often before this story is told—was Master d'Aviz, who would one day be King.

The Queen ordered that the armor of Master d'Aviz be brought that Nuno might be knighted without delay. And thus Nuno was knighted, at the hand of the Queen, when he was but thirteen years of age—and in the armor of Master d'Aviz, the King's own brother!

vii

Things went from bad to worse for King Ferdi-

nand who had hardly hoped, anyway, to win more than partial freedom from Castile.

In a short time, to avoid still greater evils, the Pope intervened and insisted that peace be made.

One of the severest conditions of the peace-pact was the surrender of several localities to Castile which would ever leave an open road for the Castilian armies to re-enter Portugal.

Several of the usual political marriages were also a part of the peace pact. These marriages were to bind the political houses of Spain and Portugal to guarantee friendly relations. The King of Portugal promised to give his sister in marriage to the brother of the King of Spain.

The two Kings met at Vallada; and two days later the nuptials were celebrated. The King of Castile retired with his army from Portugal, and Ferdinand re-entered Lisbon.

In the new court, as special equerry to the Queen, was Sir Nuno Alvarez Pereira, thirteen years old.

2

REALITY SHATTERS DREAMLAND

IT WAS not that day in Santarem, when impetuous and self-willed Queen Leonora gave Nuno his sword after the mystic words, "May God make you a good and noble knight," that Nuno Alvarez really became a knight.

He became a knight the day he resolved to be like Sir Galahad and, turning with large, ingenuous eyes to the Lady Irene, said: "Mother, *my fair Lady shall be the Blessed Virgin, the fairest of all.* And I shall carry Her token with me everywhere." And little Nuno adjusted his brown scapular over his heart—the token his Lady had brought from Heaven through the English saint, named Simon Stock, little more than a hundred years before.

Lady Irene repressed the tears that welled in the corners of her eyes and swept Nuno into her arms with an impassioned heartsob of prayer, holding him close to her a long moment. When she had

control of herself and of her voice, she slowly released him and said: "Nuno, no resolution could be greater. Your Lady will never betray you if you are ever faithful to Her."

This was the time that the news of those devotions—the Rosary and the Scapular—had traveled throughout Europe. The report had it that the Rosary had been given to the founder of the Friars Preachers, Saint Dominic. The Virgin had told this Saint that if people would say the Rosary, heresy would be extinguished and many blessings would come. And the Scapular had been given to the General of the Carmelite Order, Saint Simon Stock, with the promise: *"Whosoever dies in this shall never suffer eternal fire!"*

For a while, no one dared believe. But through the Rosary the Albigensians, who had been destroying the faith in Europe, were utterly defeated. And everywhere this brown badge was the vehicle of miracles. The dead were raised to life at its touch, the sick were cured, marvelous conversions were wrought. And in 1322 (thirty-seven years before Nuno's birth), Pope John XXII, almost immediately after his election to the Papacy, had issued a bull known as "The Sabbatine," in which he declared that those who wore this Brown Scapular faithfully, and would in addition observe chastity according to their state and say certain daily prayers

in honor of Mary, would be freed from Purgatory on the first Saturday after death! The Pope said that he had received the command of this great indulgence from Heaven.

Throughout the Church, therefore, people were discussing and practicing these two devotions, "from Pope to peasant." They were like a great and powerful spiritual medicine, given by a great Motherly Physician, to cure the evils of the day.

The immediate followers of Saint Simon Stock and of Saint Dominic (as also of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux) were there to talk of them. The virtues of these Saints were being extolled by their thousands of followers over all Europe. A chapel was honored in Rome (and is to this day) where Saint Dominic, Saint Francis, and Saint Angelus (a great Carmelite preacher of the day, later martyred) are said to have met together and recognized each other though they had never been introduced. Among the many prophecies they made to each other was the one by Saint Dominic: *"One day, the Scapular and the Rosary will be Our Lady's instruments for saving the world."*

ii

The devotion of Nuno to the Blessed Virgin—his choice of Her as "his Lady"—was a part of him for obvious reasons. It sprang from the boy's own

goodness, and from association with the monks of the various Orders who stopped frequently at Bombjardin—especially Cistercians, Dominicans, Carmelites and Franciscans. The Cistercians had been brought to Portugal by Count Henry of Burgundy, first Count of Portugal. It was in Burgundy that Saint Bernard had founded his monastery of Clairvaux, and Count Henry had brought the teachings of Saint Bernard about Mary, the Mediatrix of All Grace, the Virgin of the "Memorare." One of the Count's first acts, on being made Count of Portugal after the defeat of the Moors, was to erect an immense monastery in Alcobaça, about fifteen miles from Fatima, to which he brought nine hundred of Saint Bernard's monks.

"Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary," Nuno was taught, "that never was it known, that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother! To thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petition, but in thy mercy hear and answer me!"

And it was not only a case of Nuno choosing Mary.

She, on Her side, chose him—and chose him as Her warrior. Pope Benedict XV, when beatifying Nuno Alvarez Pereira on January 23, 1918, during

the first World War, prefaced his decree with the words: "It was evidently the provident and wise counsel of God to reserve this most noble Cause for this time of war and stress in Europe in order that a perfect example of Christian patriotism might shine in the darkness of selfish hate."

iii

The immediate result of Nuno's devotion to Our Lady was a love of the Holy Eucharist. Through the saying of the Rosary and through identification of himself as his Queen's Knight by the token of Her Scapular, he was thinking of Mary frequently. He trained for Her; he proudly asked Her to witness his little victories over other boys in jousting; he told Her that Her picture would dominate his coat of arms; he was speaking to Her as his horse clattered over the moat at Bombjardin after hours on the countryside—countryside on which he was to conduct one of the great, decisive battles of world history, and on which his Queen would, centuries later, during another and far greater war, appear with conditions for world peace.

More and more, as the boy grew older and his devotion to Mary increased almost to a way of life, Lady Irene noticed that Nuno remained longer at his prayers in the Bombjardin chapel. Once in awhile, outside the regular prayer times, the boy

would go voluntarily to visit "the Great Lord." He often mentioned First Communion, and how he longed to receive the Great Lord into his own self. Don Alvaro was not indifferent to this unusual growth of piety, but Lady Irene was ecstatic over it. "Whence is it, O Lord," she would say, "that I should have such a son!" And she redoubled her practices of penance, and begged God that Nuno might make up for the weaknesses of her own life.

Thus Nuno, through the good fortune of choosing the Queen of Heaven as his Lady, was easily and quite naturally becoming a saint.

iv

At the Court in Santarem, Nuno was shocked at the little respect given to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and the scarcity of praise to Mary. He was not yet old enough fully to realize the extent of wickedness in the palace, but it did seem to him that there was a not altogether agreeable change in Diego.

When the Court returned to Lisbon, after the Pope had imposed a truce with Castile, and Nuno followed as equerry to the Queen, he found that he had, without seeking it, become a favorite of the Queen. Deceived by her beauty and gentleness towards him, he could not believe the evil that he heard rumored of her. When he missed the Lady

Irene, he asked the Queen if she would not bring Lady Irene to Lisbon as governess of the royal daughter, Beatrice. The Queen at once assented, and Lady Irene came to Lisbon.

We do not know exactly what followed, during those next four years, but we can imagine.

Nuno was approaching adolescence in the worst atmosphere imaginable. His vision of Sir Galahad, the Knight who so loved chastity and chivalry, was being beaten and shattered every day by what he saw and heard around him. He was perplexed, saddened. He knew His Lady did not approve. Her great gifts—the Rosary and the Scapular—were not appreciated as they should have been appreciated. Our Lord was left alone in His tabernacle prison day after day, and even on Sundays. Meanwhile, almost under the same roof, He was being insulted.

Lady Irene watched over her son and prayed ceaselessly. "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known, that anyone who fled to thy protection . . ." Nuno had flown to Mary's protection, he had given Her his life. Her Scapular was his token, Her Rosary his voice.

And His Lady was with him.

Instead of being absorbed by his milieu of sensuality, Nuno was repulsed by it. He resolved to take a vow of virginity. Like Galahad, he felt that vir-

ginity would be a source of achievement over evil. He feared to make known his resolve to anyone, even to the Lady Irene. But as Brother Francis had chosen Lady Poverty and wedded himself to her by vow, Nuno had decided to choose Lady Chastity as his spouse.

Was even this dream to be shattered?

v

In the spring of 1376, when Nuno was sixteen, Don Alvaro again came to court. The elderly governor seemed to feel the approach of death and he wanted to leave things in order.

Shortly after he had come to Lisbon, he sent for Nuno.

The young knight was to be found either in the field, in chapel, or with history books.

"Nuno," his father began, "it seems to me that the time has come when, for your own good and in the service of God and of the King, you ought to marry."

The words struck Nuno's heart like a thunderbolt. He had not thought, in making his secret vow, that his father might impose marriage under parental command. He had spent his energies in study and in the risks and excitement of the chase, and knew, by such prudence and by restraint of imagination,

with the help of God that even in the Court of Lisbon he could keep the vow.

There was a resolute tone to Don Alvaro's voice—a tone that Nuno knew well. It could readily change to a shout that would rock the room were there the slightest word of dissent. He knew that his father would have laughed at his vow. He bowed his head.

"You are a man now, Nuno," continued Don Alvaro affectionately, "and you ought to make a family for yourself. I have made a good choice for you. It is Lady Eleonora de Alvim, who is young and beautiful, very rich, of the first nobility, like ours. She is the widow of Vasco Conçalves de Barosso. I have already caused her to be questioned in this regard, and she has consented pending the King's approval. As soon as I arrived in Lisbon I asked the King, and he not only approved but has already had Lady Eleonora called to court. Also, since she is related to us within the fourth degree, I have applied for the dispensation from Pope Gregory IX. It is an excellent match and I would very much like to see you make it. What do you think?"

This question was useless after Don Alvaro had so wilfully determined the course Nuno would take.

Though taken aback, the young knight hesitatingly stammered a few words.

"My Lord, I pray you, dispense me from marrying—I was not prepared for such news as this. Leave

me to consider the matter. Meanwhile you could answer that . . . "

His father cut short the conversation. He was amazed and extremely annoyed.

As soon as Nuno had left, Don Alvaro told Lady Irene of Nuno's reaction. He could not understand it.

"Nuno," she said to him, when they were alone together, "your father told me that you were hesitant about marrying Lady Eleanora de Alvim. Why? She is a most attractive and a fine young lady. You would have much in common."

Then Nuno finally opened his soul to his mother, telling her of his intention never to marry at all. Lady Irene herself, under the circumstances of the day and undoubtedly mindful of her own experience with Don Alvaro, brought forth a thousand reasons why Nuno should marry. She begged Nuno to accept willingly. But he refused, constantly, steadfastly. When the conversation was over, much perturbed Lady Irene went to Don Alvaro to tell him what had happened.

Immediately Don Alvaro called in other sons who might influence Nuno, and told them that all should try to make the young knight see the foolishness of his intention to abstain from marriage. "I am resolved that, for his own good and for the common good, Nuno should make this marriage, although I do not wish to resort to violence."

Before long the young esquire recognized that it would be useless to oppose his father any longer.

With a fervent prayer to His Lady, and offering this act of obedience to Her as he had offered all else in his life, he gave his consent.

Lady Eleanora de Alvim arrived at Villa Nova-da-Rainha, where the court was then staying, with a magnificent retinue of relations and servants.

The nuptials, in which King Ferdinand and the Queen took part, were celebrated with great pomp on Our Lady's great feast, August 15, (1376), a day that was to be recurrently important in Nuno's life. Immediately after the ceremony, the newly married couple went to Bomjardin.

vi

For three years following, after a brief stay at Bomjardin, Nuno lived the peaceful life of a country gentleman on his own estate, the Villa of Santa Maria de Pedrassa in the Minho, formerly one of the properties of his wife's family. He found happiness there. It was a relief to be away from court life, to ride and hunt through the beautiful mountains, his own master, followed by his fifteen equerries and twenty or thirty valets. For the time he himself believed that the dreams of his youth—dreams of being a Galahad to save and purify Portugal—were over and done with, that nothing re-

mained for him but to govern his household and to preside over the education of his children.

He had two sons. Both died soon after birth. Later came a daughter whom Nuno and Lady Eleonora named Beatrice, after the Princess Beatrice (to whom Nuno's mother was still governess). Nuno loved his little daughter deeply and poured upon her the affection of his great heart.

In the melancholy moments when there came to his memory the thought of his promise of virginity and of being a grand knight; when, in the hall-of-arms of his castle, the sun perhaps penetrating through the high glass windows and sending flashes from the helmets, from the breastplates of steel, from the swords that hung there idle; when there awoke again in Nun'Alvarez the spirit of a free country and he wept for his shattered dreams; then especially did the young father go to press his tiny daughter to his heart. And in this way he forgot the vanities, the fantastic enterprises, the longed-for glory he had hoped to win for his Lady.

During those three years, Nuno came to be an idol not only to his wife and servants and to all their dependents, but to the people of all the surrounding country. One biographer says: "He was adored for his goodness."

He was still doing everything for "his Lady." And

he was growing in humility, and especially in love of the Blessed Eucharist.

His Lady was still doing things for him.

3

SIR GALAHAD

NUNO'S THREE years of country life passed like a moment.

Meanwhile, in May of 1378, Nuno's father, the great Don Alvaro, died in Amierira. Nuno went to the obsequies which, though sad, were extremely solemn and impressive. The corpse was carried in an immense procession from Amierira to Flor de Rosa, where it was laid to rest in a bed of stone.

As successor to Don Alvaro in the Priorship of Crate and Grand Master of the Knights of Saint John, the King named Don Peter Alvarez, Nuno's eldest brother. (In so doing, however, he committed an open injustice to Alvaro Conçalves Camello, who already had the title of Poiares, and to whom the place of Grand Master belonged, therefore, by right of succession.)

All was disorder in the kingdom.

The truce with Castile had been short-lived. Not

only was Castile being deprived of Portuguese revenues, but the King of Portugal, himself, was faced with a disunited kingdom, the various nobles plundering and hoarding for themselves. The very knowledge that the King was leading the country to ruin with Castile gave fuel to the desire of the various nobles to enrich themselves. Those really good, like Nuno, felt inadequate and too disunited to cope with such a confusion of evils. The wicked were without restraint.

King Ferdinand, himself, was not altogether wanting in natural ability and a certain goodness of heart, but by his weakness, and through the connivings of the Queen, he made himself accomplice to all the perfidies which afflicted his miserable country. Portugal, unhappy land, was each day becoming more and more subject to the power of her enemies, both domestic and foreign.

One day Nuno received a message from the King.

"Arm yourself and repair to Portalegre," it read, "and aid in defense of the city. The Castilians threaten to take it."

Notwithstanding all the scandals and the folly of his sovereign, Nuno recognized the King as the civil authority in Portugal and the symbol of the country. He did not hesitate a moment. He ordered his equerries and valets, bade goodbye to his wife and baby, and within twenty-four hours he was galloping

away from the pretentious residence of Pedrassa towards a distant battle. He was scarcely twenty years old.

How many other young men, at the call of their country, have done the same!

ii

When Nuno arrived at Portalegre, dust-covered and weary, and was admitted to the city, he found the defenses there in sad state. There was no unity. There was no strategy. The people were panicky.

Immediately Nuno set to work. Despite his few years, as he galloped about the city with his entourage of equerries and valets, giving orders and bolstering morale with spirited words of encouragement, no one thought to question his authority. He organized patrols and met the Castilians before they reached the city. There was bloody fighting and Nuno was in the thick of it. Many older men, shamed by his bravery, threw themselves wholeheartedly into the battle and the Castilians were routed.

Sheer bravery had won the day.

When the situation was well in hand, Nuno gathered his remaining men together, and rode back to Pedrassa.

But he was no longer a country gentleman.

Sir Galahad had come to life!

iii

Nuno's immediate followers—his own equerries and valets—were, as we have said, utterly devoted to him. They not only admired, but loved him. And after the manner in which he conducted affairs at Portalegre, their admiration and love increased a hundredfold.

He was not back at Pedrassa long before he had a plan that would take him back to the front.

He called his immediate followers together, and having obtained their permission he sent the following note to John Ansures, son of one of the Castilian leaders:

"I and ten of my men will meet you and ten of your men in open combat. If the victory is ours, you will retire from Portugal, and not many lives will have been lost. If we die, then at least we shall not see the ruin of our country."

The Castilians accepted, and Nuno and his chosen ten were already prepared and about to ride off to this rendezvous with death when an order came from King Ferdinand forbidding the project.

The person responsible for this prohibition was Don Peter Alvarez (Nuno's older brother), the Prior of Crate, to whom Nuno had confided his plan. Being an utterly practical man, and not too inclined to the heroic, Don Peter had secretly written to the

King and asked that Nuno be forbidden to so risk his life.

It must have been humiliating for Nuno to write to John Ansures and cancel the duel out of obedience to a king who otherwise commanded little obedience in his kingdom. But Nuno's respect for authority, which he knew came from God, was greater than his regard for his own honor. He knew his Lady, in Heaven, wanted him to serve Her this time by staying home. But it was not until he had gone to the King personally and thrown himself on his knees before the throne, extolling the virtues of his plan as a way of perhaps saving many lives, that he was convinced that it was not a royal whim, but a command which he had to obey.

Meanwhile, the Castilians were laying seige to Lisbon and, emboldened by weak resistance, made frequent raids upon the suburbs.

Before long, Nuno received a royal order to go to Lisbon.

Despite the wretched conditions — worse even than those at Portalegre—Nuno did not lose heart when he arrived and saw the apparent hopelessness of the situation.

One night, with Peter Alphonse, his cousin, and a handful of gallants (they were only thirty on foot and twenty-four mounted) he made his way out of the gate of Saint Catherine to set an ambush for

the enemy. Taking their places near the bridge of Alcantara, the adventurers hid themselves.

It was late August. The night air was heavy with the scent of mown hay. They were in enemy territory and they feared lest the slightest noise—the neighing of a horse, the ring of spur or clank of armor—might betray them.

The enemy arrived, coming, as Nuno had foreseen, to despoil the vineyards and orchards, to take some fruit for the Castilian ships in the harbor and the troops on land, and to ruin the rest and thus increase the effectiveness of their blockade of the city.

As soon as the enemy's troops had sent their armed guard towards the city gate and then scattered the others about without encumbrance of armor, despoiling the countryside, Nuno and his men pounced from their hiding places and cut the unarmed plunderers to pieces. Confused, the distant armed guard broke into flight.

Nuno and his men had gathered together and were about to make their triumphant return to the city when they became aware that over 200 Castilians had suddenly disembarked from the Castilian ships anchored in the harbor. After the rout of their own soldiers, learned from the guards who had but gone for help when Nuno's men attacked, the Castilians had immediately disembarked troops to cut off the Portuguese retreat to the city.

Nun'Alvares gave a shout to his men.

They had to give battle even though so greatly outnumbered. There was no retreat.

Some of his followers say that Nuno seemed to exult in these great odds. He spurred his horse on, before all the others, trusting in God and conscious of the token of his Queen that rested over his heart —mindful of Her promise, made over a hundred years before to Saint Simon Stock, and never broken. His lance lay on his right arm and the prayer of battle rose to his lips.

But his followers, dismayed by the superior numbers, unexpectedly turned and fled.

Nun'Alvarez *rode alone against two hundred men.*

Nuno had not galloped far when he realized that he was alone. He glanced over his shoulder and saw his followers running for cover. But he did not check his horse. "I will die, if God so wills," he said, "but at least I shall not see the cowardice of the Portuguese."

Within a moment he was in the midst of the Castilian forces. His lance splintered in his hands on the first, mighty impact. He brandished his sword, striking right and left amid a rain of arrows and stones and against the thrusts of hostile spears. It was to his advantage that he was mounted, armored and so close to the troops that only a few could get near him at a time, and they had to be careful

lest their arrows or lances should wound their own men.

Almost at the first clash of battle—the sound of Nuno's splintering lance over the din of Castilian shouts—many of Nuno's followers came to their senses and, filled with remorse and reckless abandon, they wheeled their horses and galloped to the fight. When they arrived, Nuno's horse had just fallen under him and he had rolled over in the fall. Nuno's horsemen charged through the Castilians, and a Portuguese lance pierced the soldier who had lifted his sword to strike through Nuno's visor.

Meanwhile, other Portuguese came from the city and attacked the Castilians from the rear. In a matter of moments, the Castilians were completely routed. The few who were not slain barely saved themselves by covering their retreat to the ships.

4

LEONORA AND ANDEIRO

THESE WARS, as we have said, were brought upon the country by Portugal, itself, through dissension with Castile. The situation was made critical by the lack of union within the nation and conditions in the royal court.

At this hour the person who would prove to be Portugal's greatest menace, and one of Nuno's deadliest enemies, was the man who had schemed this war.

We want to burden our narration with as little Portuguese history as possible, because we are trying to present a single man, rather than the history of a nation.

However, Count Andeiro—and this war which he helped to negotiate—are keys to all the rest of Nuno's public life.

John Fernando Andeiro was a Frenchman who had come into Portugal when Nuno was nine years

old. He was the male counterpart to Queen Leonora Telles. As the beautiful Leonora Telles had become queen through intrigue, handsome John Andeiro became Count of Ourem in the same way: he became the Queen's lover.

This terrible scandal—between his wife and a handsome, unscrupulous outsider—seemed patent to everyone but King Ferdinand. And when Andeiro was accused of treachery to the crown, in a plot to kill Ferdinand, the Queen persuaded the King that Andeiro was innocent. The matter was taken to the King of Spain, however, of whom King Ferdinand was really a subject, and Andeiro was exiled to England.

There is where matters rose to a crisis.

Andeiro did not leave his scheming behind him when he sailed out of Lisbon on his exile.

He had not been in England long when, on credentials obtained by Queen Leonora to the effect that he was a Portuguese ambassador to England, the wicked Count of Ourem contracted a secret alliance between England and Portugal, engaging the help of the English in a great war against Castile, in return for which England's Prince Edward, son of the Duke of Lancaster, was promised the hand of the Infanta Beatrice (daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Leonora). This meant that

one day, by succession, Prince Edward would be regent of Portugal.

It was typical Andeiro treachery. The Infanta Beatrice had already been promised to the Duke of Benevento in the treaty at Vallada, in 1373. And Andeiro knew that King Ferdinand had consumption (then a fatal disease) and he and Queen Leonora were to be married, as soon as the King died, and rule Portugal together—after the English had helped them free Portugal from Castile!

Leonora Telles was a spoiled woman, utterly selfish, recklessly dissatisfied, restless, Godless. But who would suspect that so much beauty could cloak such ugliness? Certainly Ferdinand could not, despite all the evidence he had. Besides, his own record was not so clean. Had he not transgressed every decency in making her his Queen?

But if there was anyone Leonora really loved, it was Andeiro—who was a common as she, and clever, handsome, daring, accomplished. Besides these natural virtues, they had their treachery in common. Neither of them cared anything for Portugal as such. They cared only in life, in power, in the exciting danger of intrigue, and in each other. They had no scruples in the world, no sense of fidelity to a promise, no sense of obligation to any person or to any nation.

So the beautiful Leonora, and the handsome

Andeiro, like ugly characters in an ugly (but unfortunately true) fairytale, made an impossible pledge to England, that they might ultimately betray both England and Ferdinand.

The English were deceived, and made the pact.

Of course King Ferdinand, who thirsted for Portuguese independence, saw in this pact the fulfillment to his long desires. Before he died, with the help England could send him—an England that feared the rising power of Spain (Castile) — he would achieve the independence of his country.

In gratitude, he conferred special honors on Andeiro and new grants of land, and could not sufficiently thank his treacherous wife.

It was while Nuno was still in Lisbon that Ferdinand and Queen Leonora went down to the great port to meet Count Andeiro, who arrived there from England in the company of the Duke of Lancaster and a squadron of at least forty-eight ships and three thousand soldiers—infantry and archers—all of whom reached Lisbon safely and disembarked. Andeiro, the traitorous exile, returned as a hero.

Now Ferdinand would show Castile that Portugal would be a free nation.

As events developed, it seemed that the battle would be fought between the city of Badajoz, which was held by the Castilians, and Elvas, which was held by the Portuguese and English. Nuno was still

in Lisbon when the English army had disembarked there and gone to prepare for the battle. He longed to go along, but his older brother, the Prior of Crate—who had been placed in charge of the city, refused permission. It was this same brother, Don Peter Alvarez, who had blocked Nuno's duel with John of Ansures and the ten Castilians. Now Don Peter, holding command among the forces in Lisbon, not only refused permission to Nuno, but he gave orders that the guards at all the gates of Lisbon were to be doubled and that on no condition were Nuno and his men to be permitted to leave the city.

Nuno had hoped to persuade his brother. Now the doubled guard at the gates of the city was a final answer.

It was too much.

Feeling that the King would need him, Nuno—whether with or without his entourage we do not know—opened a way for himself at one of the gates at the point of his lance. His bravery was so well known among the soldiery, from the incident at the gate of St. Catherine, that no one challenged him. In a matter of moments he was galloping along the road to Elvas, where the King received him.

Each hour of each day brought details that pointed to a very great battle. The two hostile armies

had come up to each other and were camped on opposite sides of the Caya River.

Suddenly, to the bewilderment of King Ferdinand, the Castilians withdrew towards Badajoz.

There was no battle.

Hostilities were immediately abandoned and a few days later a new treaty of peace was made.

Had Andeiro revealed his motives to the King of Castile? Or had the word gotten out that Ferdinand—who was the backbone of the revolt against Castile—should never have been on the battlefield because he was wasting away with tuberculosis, then a mortal disease, and that with his death, Portuguese independence would die at the hand of Andeiro?

Ferdinand had hoped to establish Portuguese independence before his death, but with this sudden retreat it now seemed impossible. He felt defeated.

Back in Almada, as death approached, the long deluded and vacillating regent saw Leonora in her true colors. For all her beauty and poise and lavish living, she was a traitor, faithless to him. Her association with Andeiro had become more public than ever. If, after his death, she and Andeiro were married it would be disastrous to Portugal. He foresaw, too, pretention to the throne by his younger brother, the Master d'Aviz, whom he cordially hated.

Seeing his own ruin, the wretched man decided to take everyone to ruin with him—like Samson shaking the columns in the temple of the Philistines.

ii

The sick King suddenly reopened negotiations with the King of Castile.

He had made up his mind that the Infanta Beatrice, scarcely twelve years of age, would marry the King of Castile himself! Thus with the King of Castile heir to the regency of Portugal, *there would be no more Portugal;* there would be no opening for the scheming Andeiro; there would be no throne for the Master d'Aviz, his brother.

During the first week of May, therefore, in 1383, when Nuno was twenty-three years of age and had already shown himself so ready to die for the independence of Portugal, the Infanta Beatrice left for Elvas accompanied by Queen Leonora. The sick King Ferdinand could not make the trip. He had become unable to move. Meanwhile the Castilian King was making his way to Badajoz to receive the Infanta as his bride.

"He thinks to deprive me of a throne," said Leonora, "but I shall rule Castile, too!"

Thus, while King Ferdinand was dying in Almada, Queen Leonora held a splendid court in Elvas. With a plan of her own she awaited the

visit of Don John I, of Castile. She was then less than thirty-five years of age, in the full splendor of her regal sovereignty and of her beauty. Although she had been sent to Elvas with the Infanta to write her own defeat, she fully expected to win Don John to herself, even though he would marry her daughter.

The King of Castile finally arrived. He rode at the head of a brilliant following, quite ready to receive the spouse that brought him the dowry of Portugal. Leonora Telles went to meet him with her pompous cortege.

When he saw her, Don John descended gallantly from his horse to kiss the queen's gloved hand. Then he seized the bridle of the mule she was riding and accompanied her on foot between the two lines of the Portuguese. A murmur of admiration rose from every side at the passage of the sovereigns. Flashes of victory darted from Leonora's starry eyes.

iii

It was the 14th of May, 1383, the day of the wedding.

Nuno and his brothers had been invited to this national suicide. And Nuno, above all, took it hard. He remembered so well those words of his father: "Some day, Nuno, there will be a great war for the independence of Portugal, and she will need her Sir Galahad." He remembered his promise to fight

for his Great Lady in Heaven, to free Portugal from a bondage of corrupt government, to show it the path to spiritual nobility through the example of virtuous chivalry.

When Nuno arrived, in the company of his brother, Ferdinand Pereira, he entered the magnificent tent in which the banquet was being held. Seven Bishops were there, from each of the two kingdoms, with the gentry and the great dignitaries of two courts. At the sides of the royal board, which was raised upon a broad platform under a rich canopy, sprawled long rows of tables. The sovereigns and princes seated themselves according to rank; the others confusedly shoved for the remaining places.

Don Nuno Alvarez Pereira and his brother, Ferdinand, of Portugal's highest nobility, had no seats reserved for them. It was not a day for patriots.

More angry than ever, Nuno and Ferdinand finally found places in the very back of the tent. From there they could see the place the Frenchman Andeiro had, near the sovereigns, and they could see the many exchanges which took place between the King of Castile and the treacherous Leonora as the wine flowed more and more freely.

Finally, unable to restrain himself any longer, Nuno whispered to Ferdinand: "We have nothing to do here, let's go! But first I intend to punish them."

He got up impetuously. Elbowing his way through the swarm of courtiers, he approached the banquet table. There, in the very face of the royal gathering, and in full view of everyone in the tent, in the hush that fell upon that most important gathering of two kingdoms, Don Nuno seized one of the table legs, shook the table until it crashed to the ground, and plates, glasses, rich earthenware and viands of all description rattled and rolled after hastily retreating royalty. Then, in the general paralysis of stupefaction, Nuno walked out as calmly as if he had done nothing at all.

As soon as Lady Leonora recovered from her shock, she flared with rage. Since Don John was the greater sovereign, however, she looked to him to avenge the insult. But the King, when he learned who the daring youth was, felt that some concession should be made and only remarked coldly: "A man who could do this is capable of doing more."

Later events certainly demonstrated the truth of his words!

iv

Feeling at least slightly avenged on the adulterous Queen, on the despicable Andeiro, and on the Castilian King, Nun'Alvarez sprang to his horse and set out for his home in the Minho.

As he galloped along, his conscience pricked him

for showing anger. "But was it not just?" he asked himself. "Should not someone show that virtue is still alive in Portugal?"

Events of the future would also show that the example which Nuno set on that May 14, in the grand banquet tent at Elvas, was to have an effect on all the future of Portugal.

Nuno was not the only person at that banquet who bewailed the betrayal of Portugal. There was the Master d'Aviz (only two years older than Nuno), the young brother of the dying Ferdinand, who by the alliance made that day was being deprived of any pretension to the throne. When Don Nuno Alvarez Pereira, a mere noble property holder in the kingdom, dared to throw the entire event into confusion by turning over the royal banquet table, the spirit of the Master d'Aviz flamed to a conviction that all was not lost. "Hope and wait!" an inner voice said to him. "Hope and wait!"

In the hilarity of the wedding feast, the clamorous episode and the moody silence of the Master d'Aviz were soon forgotten. King John, in the union of the two crowns, saw the fruition of all his aspirations. Lady Leonora, on the other hand, saw that she could rely on her charms to dominate her royal son-in-law and bind the ambitious Andeiro more closely to herself than ever. In the effusion of the event, which outwardly seemed so sincere,

each one was trying in turn to deceive the other.

Three days later, on the 17th day of May, 1383, the nuptial blessing was given at Badajoz. The youthful Infanta, heiress to the crown of Portugal, after her fifth betrothal had finally become a spouse: the Queen of Castile.

5

NUNO'S SWORD

DURING THE October following, Ferdinand died in Lisbon, friendless, unhappy. He was vested in the Franciscan habit and buried in the church of Saint Francis in Lisbon, on the little hill in front of the royal palace. Through the streets of the city, heralds, with blasts of trumpets, were proclaiming Lady Beatrice the Queen of Portugal.

The body of Don Ferdinand was entombed hastily because of rapid decomposition. Queen Leonora, as regent, then fixed the solemn obsequies for the thirtieth day after the King's death, and the word went into the most distant provinces that all might come to pay their respects.

Naturally, among those to come were the Pereiras. Peter Alvarez, the head of the family, came from Crate.

Nun'Alvarez hastened from his possessions in the

Minho, but foreboding some treachery he led with him his rather large and well armed escort.

When Nuno appeared at the court, Lady Leonora protested that she had forgiven his burst of temper at the banquet and that he should send his men away. But Nuno kept them near him. After mentioning it several times, the Queen shrugged her shoulders and pretended not to notice Nuno's companions.

Events were hastening to a crisis. The people were in bad humor.

When Lady Leonora, under pretense of sickness, refused to follow the remains of the King while they were being carried to the grave, the discontent rose to a pitch in the city. Moreover, it happened that the King of Castile, violating all recent treaties, had a large body of soldiers in Portugal. Andeiro, too, whom the people despised as a foreigner who had wormed his way to power, had returned to the court from his County of Ourem and, more impudent than ever, fairly flaunted his shameful ascendency over the mind of the widowed Queen.

"What is to become of this miserable country?" thought Nuno. In the struggle that was threatening among many varied interests, he foresaw the end of Portugal when King John of Castile would assume possession of the kingdom through the heritage of his titled bride, Beatrice. On the other

hand, he foresaw an infinite series of woes for the country if the secret intrigues of Lady Leonora and the Count Andeiro were to prevail. Andeiro above all, the evil genius of Portugal, was to be feared.

But what remedy was there?

Revolution was the only answer. They would have to overthrow the regency and declare the Master of Aviz King of Portugal.

Nuno shared his fears and thoughts with one of his uncles, Ruy Pereira, who was also at the obsequies.

"Let us see what the Master of Aviz has to say," Ruy suggested.

They sought him out and expressed their hope.

At first the Master declined. A shrewd statesman, for all his youth, he feared that the people, weakened under the government of Ferdinand, would not comprehend the high ideal of independence to which he aimed, and that they would not accept him.

"Why not approach Alvaro Paes, ex-chancellor of your father, King Peter?" Nuno suggested. "He is loved by the people. For the independence of Portugal he would support you."

Delicately the conspirators approached the old ex-chancellor with their plan. The elderly statesman's eyes flashed, and a new vigor seemed to quicken his enfeebled frame.

"You can count on my support," he said, "unto death."

With things coming to such a pass, Nuno was not sure of himself. He was not sure that he was pleasing his Lady in Heaven, that he was not about to sully Her Scapular-token by a wrong deed.

Provoked by these hesitations, Nuno made a spiritual retreat to Santarem. While there, he had decided to have his sword sharpened. It was a good Toledo blade. He left it at the armorer's and said that he would call for it the next day.

When Nuno returned to the armorer's shop, the blade was ready for him but, were it not for the familiar hilt, he would not have recognized it. He walked over to the window, turning the blade in his hands and staring at it in amazement. It shone in the sun as if it were living fire. On one side was the mark of the armorer: a cross with a star at the extremity of the longer arm, and the motto: *Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus* — "The Lord is high above all nations." On the opposite side was the flowered cross of the Alvarez interwoven with letters that read: "To Don Nuno Alves." Above this, its five letters piercing his heart with an inexplicable thrill of pleasure and devotion, stood the holy name *"Maria."*

Nuno was lost in emotion. He seized the sword, thrust and parried with it, watching sunbeams min-

gle with the steel. All the fervor for Portugal's freedom seemed to well up anew in his heart. Again he felt a living faith in his destiny. As the blade turned in his strong hands it seemed to mirror the swords of the Paladins; that holy name *Mary,* the name of the sweet, celestial Lady to whom he had consecrated his heart, whose brown uniform of Carmel he wore beneath his armor as a token, told him that his Lady was not displeased with him.

Radiant, he turned to ask the price of the work.

The armorer, who was standing by wreathed in smiles, delighting in the young soldier's enthusiasm, answered: "Nothing, sire. You owe me nothing now. Your Lordship will repay me when you return here as the Count of Ourem."

"Count of Ourem!" Nuno exclaimed, eyes wide with surprise. "Why . . ."

He did not finish the sentence.

Nor did the armorer say more.

The man who carried that title, the present Count of Ourem, *was Count Andeiro,* perhaps at that hour the most powerful man in Portugal because of his influence over Queen Leonora. At any moment Andeiro might wed the regent and become the master of Portugal, leading the entire realm to spiritual and financial ruin as he was doing in Ourem itself.

Nuno insisted on paying, but the armorer did not wish to yield.

In the not distant future Nuno would indeed come back to his shop, as the Count of Ourem.

6

REVOLUTION

VERY FEW hagiographers have such a tale of blood, and of conflicting principles, as must be told in these next few moments.

There is variety among God's spiritual heroes. "Inscrutable are His ways" Who led His chosen people to their land under the generalship of Joshua and by force of arms, and Who later said: "They who take the sword shall perish by the sword." The sermon on the mount, which proclaimed the spiritual nature of man, and blessed those who would make peace, perhaps contains the answer. Some can make peace by never taking the sword. Sometimes peace can be made in no other way than by the sword. But blessed are they who make it.

Nuno was, for all his manly love of adventure, a peacemaker. He wanted to fight John of Ansures, a great Castilian warrior, to settle the war with his own blood rather than risk the lives of many in long

and bloody battles. And when he saw that revolution against a wicked queen was the only hope for spiritual and national safety in Portugal, he was hesitant. Were it not for the apparent miracle of his sword, in the armorer's shop of Santarem, the history of Portugal might never have been written. The country might never have become a nation.

ii

While Nuno was in Santarem, the revolution which he had suggested was being plotted in Lisbon. The Master d'Aviz, after much hesitation, consented to assassinate Andeiro. He reconciled the assassination in his conscience by the thought that Andeiro was ruining Portugal, and that as the brother of the dead king he had to pronounce sentence of execution. Queen Leonora was a traitor.

The Master d'Aviz (whose name was Don John I, the same as that of the King of Castile) was much of the character of Nuno. He had never been absorbed by the wickedness of the court. Indeed, his natural virtue and ability had been greatly heightened in reaction to the excesses of his older brother, Ferdinand. That was, perhaps, the strongest reason why King Ferdinand had hated him.

As the "Master d'Aviz," Don John had a vow of celibacy, because the Order of Aviz (of which he became Grand Master at the age of thirteen) was

one of those chivalrous Orders between the military and the religious which restricted its members to celibacy and to the exercise of arms. It was an Order dedicated to the ideals which Nuno had already voluntarily realized.

Pressure was brought to bear upon the Master of Aviz, especially by the elderly Alvaro Paes. The old statesman knew how great was his influence on the people, and he besought the Master of Aviz to do away with Count Andeiro and to give the people a good government. Finally, for the supreme good of his country, the Master of Aviz seemed ready to perform the reckless deed that would precipitate the revolution.

iii

Through her agents, Leonora knew that a plot was being made, but she had no idea of its extent.

In order to remove the Master d'Aviz, she appointed him to a distant military command, to govern the fortress in Alemtejo. Don John saw nothing to do but go.

Two days' journey out of Lisbon, on the way to Alemtejo, Don John was debating with himself. He recalled all the arguments that had been torturing his mind and heart ever since the betrothal of the Infanta Beatrice.

Suddenly it occurred to him that were the extent

of the conspiracy to be discovered, even though it were not being carried out, he and Alvaro Paes and all the others who constituted Portugal's only hope would be put to death.

Transfixed by this realization he ordered his troops about and retraced the road to Lisbon. Before him he sent a secret envoy to Alvaro Paes, advising the statesman to be prepared for all they had planned.

He arrived in the capital at night. Despite the hour he made immediate application for an audience with Lady Leonora. He said that he wished to have some explanations from her regarding the charge entrusted to him in Alemtejo.

The audience was set for the morning of December 6, between nine and ten o'clock.

Dressed to his rank, with twenty armed attendants, the Master of Aviz arrived at the palace. When he came to the apartments of the Queen, the guards did not wish to let his twenty armed men attend him. Silently, Don John and his men pushed past and entered the hall. The twenty men grouped themselves near the rear wall and the Master of Aviz, then but twenty-five years of age, advanced alone, his face pale but otherwise revealing nothing. He bowed profoundly before Leonora.

The Queen was dressed in deep mourning, which only enhanced her great beauty. She was seated

in a large armchair—almost a throne—upon a low platform. As Don John had expected, Count Andeiro was at her side, and there were several ladies and lords of the court seated to the right and left.

Andeiro was standing. He was a tall, handsome man, clean shaven, in the full vigor of his forty years.

Leonora indicated the Master of Aviz to be seated.

"Well," she said, "what news have you? Why have you turned back?"

Not losing sight of Andeiro, Don John began his prepared speech about the necessity of knowing more concerning his appointment to Alemtejo. As he enumerated various plausible doubts concerning the mission, he seemed to all present to have come for no other purpose. The courtiers, who had seemed a bit strained, relaxed in their chairs. The Queen, with whatever violence her heart was beating in presentiment of the tragedy, dissimulated her anxiety. Andeiro endeavored to show himself even more indifferent, and when the difficulties concerning Alemtejo had been cleared he invited Don John to dinner. "I'm sorry," said the Master d'Aviz, rising, "but I have another engagement."

"Please," Andeiro insisted, stepping down, "I shall give the order to set additional places." And the Count started for the side door.

With a quick step, Don John was at his side.

"You shall not leave," he said coolly. "I have something to say to you."

Don John gave a bow towards the Queen, then drawing Andeiro with him left the hall through the door by which he had entered, and his twenty men followed. Leonora rose to her feet and, staring after them with eyes wide with fear, stood like a statue.

Outside the hall, the Master of Aviz pushed Andeiro into a nearby room and towards an open window, seized his dagger, and struck at Andeiro's head. The Count was wounded, but not mortally. He ran bleeding towards the hall. And Don John, who was not typed for an assassin and had done what he thought a necessary deed so badly, stood blanched and remorseful.

As Andeiro came into the hallway, he was met by Nuno's uncle, Ruy Pereira. At once grasping the wicked Count, Ruy drew his own dagger and pierced Andeiro through the heart.

Quickly coming to himself, the Master of Aviz had followed to the hall. Seeing what had happened, he immediately ordered all the doors of the palace to be locked and sent a page through the city streets crying: "Run! Everyone! To the palace! They are killing the Master of Aviz!"

This was the prearranged signal by which Alvaro

Paes would know that he should leave his house and stir up public sympathy for Don John.

In a moment the waiting ex-chancellor of old King Peter was on his horse and the people saw his familiar figure gliding through the streets and heard him crying: "Run to the help of the Master! Everyone! He is the son of King Peter, and they are killing him! Andeiro is killing him by order of the Queen!"

The populace, who hated both Queen and Count, poured from houses and shops and the cry was taken up with increased fury from one end of Lisbon to the other. Following Paes, they ran to the palace.

The gates were barred.

"Set fire to the gates," some yelled. "Break them down!"

Those within the palace, overcome by the suddenness of it all and stricken with fear at the vehemence of the mob, cried from the windows and balconies: "The Master lives! It is Andeiró who is dead!"

The maddened crowd demanded to see him.

From where he had been watching the crowd, in the shadow of the balcony over the gate, Don John now stood forth, raised his hand, and shouted: "Be assured, my friends. I am safe and sound, thanks be to God."

Delirium reigned. The people called for him. When he came down, they raised him on high and

carried him in triumph to the palace of the Admiralty.

The coup was successful.

7

THE LEADER OF PORTUGAL'S ARMIES

THE MASTER of Aviz, now the popular idol, did not wish to harm Queen Leonora. He hoped that the Queen would somewhat reform her ways, and he offered—for the good of Portugal—to marry her himself rather than violently dethrone her.

Leonora trusted, however, that the King of Castile would come to her aid. She at first shut herself in her apartments, and caused the body of Andeiro to be buried during the night in the church of Saint Martin. Then, incognito, she fled to the refuge of the castle of Alcaçova. From there she went to Alemquer, where she stayed until after Christmas, and then fled once more—this time to Santarem where she waited for the King of Castile, her son-in-law, to come and avenge her.

If she had ever known true love, it had been for Andeiro.

Meanwhile, the news of what had happened in Lisbon came to Nuno in Santarem. It had all been

so sudden. The news arrived almost on the heels of the strange event in the armorer's shop. He had hardly believed that the coup d'état he had proposed such a short time before, as little more than an idea, would so soon be a reality.

As soon as he heard the news, however, Nuno sent word to the Master of Aviz: "Upon you now depends the welfare of our country. I am with you, and will give my life if necessary."

Then Nuno sent word to his brothers, Peter and Diego, asking that they throw in their lot with the Master d'Aviz, too.

Both refused.

Calling his own companions-in-arms together, Nuno explained the situation, outlined the risks, and then asked if they wished to follow him in the difficult but glorious undertaking upon which he was about to enter. "As for myself," he said, "I have the firm conviction of success, with the help of God's grace." What did they think?

His men were of one accord: to follow him.

"Wherever you will be," a spokesman for them said, "there will we be also. We are ready to give our lives for you, for your honor, and in your service."

With tears of gratitude, Nuno embraced them one after the other. The fidelity of his companions compensated for the sorrow caused by the refusal of his brothers.

And thus, then and there, he formed the nucleus of his army of which the Master of Aviz would soon be sorely in need!

At the head of this small group, his own men and a few others who had been persuaded in Santarem to join them, Nuno was soon galloping post-haste to Lisbon. As he rode along, Nuno's spirits rose higher and higher. Now and again he drew his sword, read the inscription over and over, flashed it in the sunlight, and returned it to the scabbard. He was riding to liberate the overtaxed, oppressed, abused people of the entire realm. He was riding to drive his sword into the heart of the evil that had brought his people to spiritual and physical ruin: bad governors.

From that very day, through the men who rode behind him, Nuno Alvarez Pereira became the principal character, even the dominant figure, of Portugal's epic poetry. On that day he was beginning the glorious cycle of heroic deeds which named him, through the centuries that have followed, the national hero of his country, and a saint.

ii

In a popular assembly in Lisbon, directed by Alvaro Paes, the widowed Queen was declared deposed and the Master of Aviz was proclaimed in her stead the Defender and Regent of the kingdom.

The popular assembly — the people — proclaimed him King Don John I, of free Portugal.

That he might have counsel and assistance in governing, Don John immediately organized a council of twenty-four from among those who were most capable and faithful to him. The most authoritative of these, naturally, was Alvaro Paes, who had been Chancellor under Don John's father. The next in importance was Doctor John das Regas, who had been Major Chancellor under King Peter, with Paes. Since das Regas had but recently returned from Italy, where he had made a profound study of jurisprudence, he became the legislative mind of the new realm.

When Nuno arrived in Lisbon, and made his way to the newly formed Council that had no army to defend it, he was stormed with cheers and applause. Don John ran forward and threw his arms about him. Everyone present well knew Nuno's ascendancy over the spirit of troops. The young knight's action outside the gate of Saint Catherine had made him an idol. They asked him to be a member of the council and to assume complete charge of the army.

iii

Nuno and Don John were physical opposites, but they were spiritually similar.

Don John was a natural statesman, able, strong of will, wise. Forced during the reign of Ferdinand to be distrustful of those about him, he had become a shrewd judge of men. He had learned to choose those who could further his aims, those whom he could rely upon. He understood, too, how to avail himself of their help with great prudence and tact, without losing a shred of authority. And he had daring. He was ready to take chances.

However, he was without Nuno's devotion. Nuno had chosen the Queen of Heaven as his Lady, and he had grown saintlier day by day. Men loved him not so much for his daring as for the beauty of soul that accompanied it, shining from his deep, brown eyes. As inevitably happens, frequent thought of Our Lady had brought such graces to Nuno's soul that the knight seemed to live for his reception of Holy Communion. He was never known to speak harshly of his enemies, but rather excusingly. And though ladies—including Queen Leonora—had been doubly enamoured of him for his goodness and manliness, he was ever virtuous.

The same could not be said of Don John. However, Nuno was almost singular in those evil times. And only those who knew of his devotion to Mary knew his secret.

Physically, Don John was tall, never wore a beard, had a rather square, commanding face. His lips

were thin; his eyes, somewhat small, were black, vivacious. He was thin to the point of angularity, but strong.

Nuno, at this time, wore a very full beard. He was scarcely of medium height, lean and wiry. His complexion was unexpectedly fair. His face was oblong, and its thinness accentuated by his long nose. The beard heightened the elongation of his face and concealed a slight shortness of chin. One could hardly believe that in so slight a body could be such great strength of arm, such endurance. Yet, everything about Nuno was revealed in his eyes—deep, alive, ingenuous, brilliant under strongly arched brows. His habit of silent thought was manifested by a slight wrinkle which had already taken permanence on his forehead.

Nuno was apparently of a sanguine-melancholic temperament. He loved company, was slightly vain about his appearance. But he also liked moments of solitude, and there was a sharp line between his vanity, which was a desire that others should think well of him, and pride. In the presence of God, Nuno was as dust. And Nuno was usually in the presence of God. He seemed always to see the cheerful side of things, to such extent that he sometimes seemed unconscious of obstacles. He paid scarcely any attention to those who were jealous of him. He was self-conscious about his long nose, but

when he saw that his own men loved him despite this singularity which marked him more as an esthete than a knight, he indulgently smiled at the jokes about it. Military comradeship—the esteem of his soldiers—was of very great importance to him. He looked upon each of his soldiers with genuine affection. He felt that each one was bound to him in a common destiny, and the superiority of command was to him nothing more than the sanctity of the cause for which they fought, and the authority of good example.

The quality which Don John and Nuno held most in common was a sense of destiny and of duty. It was Nuno, especially, who had encouraged this quality in Don John. In himself it was manifest in leadership, and in the inexorable way in which he punished any neglect of discipline or of deportment among his men, particularly any default of respect due to things and persons of the Church, or of magnanimity and generosity towards the enemy. Woe indeed to any of Nuno's soldiers, in the many battles subsequently fought, who harmed a woman or child in any of the conquered regions! Woe, too, to anyone whom Nuno knew to be guilty of blasphemy, a vice which he particularly strove to banish from his troops.

iv

Within a few days after his arrival in Lisbon and

his appointment by the Council, Nuno had most of the troops of Lisbon under his standard, and on the strength of his great name alone, and the threat he made, he obtained the surrender of the fortress of Saint George. Before he had left the Council he had said to Don John: "God, Who gave the city into your power, will give you also the castle." And it was so.

A few days later Nuno's rapidly multiplying troops occupied the fort of Almada, on the other bank of the Tagus.

While this was happening, Nuno's mother, who was then in Castile with the Lady Beatrice, was sent by the King of Castile to dissuade Nuno from supporting the revolution. The Lady Irene came to Lisbon, having been persuaded by the Castilian monarch that Nuno was doing a great wrong. She begged him to renounce his position on the revolutionary council and to fight, rather, in support of Queen Leonora.

It was not long before Nuno persuaded his mother that his cause was just. He told her things he had witnessed at court, revolting and unjust, and asked her whether she thought a distant king in Vallada, Castile, could see that justice was administered among the provinces of Portugal. He asked her to look at the record, to witness the present misery of the people.

Lady Irene left not only convinced, but very proud of him. She charged him that if he held dear her blessing he must follow Portugal's new King John completely and faithfully, and she promised to send him his other brother, Ferdinand. Then she returned to the King of Castile with Nuno's answer, and secretly sent Nuno's brother, Ferdinand, from Portalegre to join Nuno and Don John I in their chivalrous war—to end what had been a succession of wars, and worse.

iv

One of the first thoughts of Nun'Alvarez was to acquire a proper banner, one which would be a symbol of his pure intentions and at the same time a continual reminder to his soldiers that they had to implore the protection of Heaven in the heart of battle.

He ordered a banner of white, bearing a red cross. The arms of the cross cut the banner into four fields of white. It was the cross of Galahad, reddened by the blood of the Redeemer. And in each of the four squares, respectively, were: (top left) The Crucified Saviour with the Virgin and Saint John at the foot of His cross; (top right) Our Lady, with the Infant Jesus in Her arms; (lower left) Saint George, kneeling; (lower right) Saint James the Greater, kneeling, hands joined in prayer.

Before this banner was even ready, the King of Castile had sent his invading army charging into the provinces south of Lisbon.

Don John called Nuno and appointed him regent of that entire section of Portugal, and begged him to go as soon as possible to defend it.

Even before Nuno's departure, however, the Portuguese were holding a council in those provinces, independent of Don John, to decide what should be done. Many members [the governor of the region (Count Alvaro) among them] felt that they should let the Castilian troops pass through unmolested because there seemed no possibility of stopping them anyway. The debate had grown strong when Nuno arrived.

After presenting his credentials, which angered Count Alvaro because they placed Nuno in command over him, Nuno added fuel to the Count's fury by accusing him: "Whoever fears the King of Castile or any other king has no place in this council. Here the question is to serve our country, not to weaken the courage of others by vain and useless words."

The furious Count demanded a retraction.

"No," Nuno shouted. "I only regret having said too little. What I have said, I have said for the good of our country and of Don John."

His noble spirit knew no cravenness.

Nevertheless, now as never before he felt the responsibility that rested upon him. Without a well organized army, with only two hundred lances and without money to enlist new ones, his duty was to defend all the south of Portugal, and to make the people believe that he could do it.

With the "Memorare" in his heart, Nuno set out for Alemtejo, where he heard of the arrival of the Spaniards at the frontier near Crate.

Everywhere Nuno solicited soldiers. By the time he reached Estremoz, where he established his general headquarters and passed his troops in review, there were about three hundred horsemen and a thousand infantry. The enemy, on the other hand, were a good five thousand and were commanded by the flower of the Spanish nobility. With them, too, were several of the Portuguese grandees who had, meantime, sided with Castile. Among these latter was Peter Alvarez (the Prior of Crate), Nuno's own brother.

One of Nuno's greatest dangers was that his troops, realizing how few they were against the enemy — outnumbered almost five to one — would decide not to follow him. The cowardly, though seemingly prudent, advice of Count Alvaro was taken up by the citizenry. Nuno had hoped to raise many more than these three hundred horsemen. It was with deep gravity that he watched them

pass in review. When they had gathered before him, he paused a moment before his clear voice rang out over the motley group.

"Are the Castilians many?" his voice sang with great calm. "Then greater will be our honor. If anyone is afraid, he should leave now. With the rest, a few, but brave and true Portuguese, I will conquer with the help of God."

Not even one abandoned him!

Resolved thus to conquer or to die, one and all, they set out for Crate with a vast blast of trumpets that was almost out of keeping with so small a major force. It was Nuno's opinion that promptness of attack would be to their advantage.

About halfway to Crate, at break of day, they met with Ruy Gonçalves, an equerry of the Prior of Crate. The latter had sent this messenger to counsel Nuno again to desist from his mad enterprise. But Nuno, who was always aroused to even higher courage when openly invited to cowardice, especially to the betrayal of his country, replied: "Tell my brother that I do not need his counsel. Moreover, he should advise the other lords, his companions, that I and my men shall die rather than betray Portugal."

The equerry hesitated.

"Do as I tell you!" Nuno spoke with fire. "Do it for me and for the bread you ate in my house. Carry

back my answer. And make haste to mount your horse. Away!"

Frightened by the vigor with which Nuno spoke, and the fire blazing in his eyes, the equerry did not wait for a second invitation. He turned his horse and sped away at a wild gallop.

Nun'Alvarez, for all his saintliness and gentility of soul and almost infinite compassion on misery or injustice wherever he found it, held his country first in his heart after his God. Later, when already old and far advanced on the path to perfect sanctity, we shall see him recover all the energy of youth, all his warlike enthusiasm, when for a brief moment someone flashes before him a threat of danger to his country.

V

It was the sixth of April, 1384, when the two armies approached each other near Atoleiros.

Nuno, only twenty-four years old, his troops greatly outnumbered, used tactics that were completely new in Portugal.

The Castilian scouts, their own forces still at some distance, were astonished to see Nuno form a square of his improvised cavalry, which was badly armed and hence with good reason believed unable to withstand even the first shock of the Castilian squadrons. Then Nuno divided the square into vanguard, rear-

guard, and two wings. The whole was defended by a hedge of inclined lances with a second man ready at each lance to grasp it if it fell. It looked like a fortress of flesh and bone.

In the very center rode Nuno Alvarez Pereira, mounted on a mule, giving his orders and suggestions in a calm, firm voice. Finally, when the men were as he wanted them, Nuno said:

"My friends, impress well upon your hearts four things. First of all, recommend yourselves to God and to the Blessed Virgin, His Mother. Then remember that we are here to serve Don John, the Master of Aviz and King of Portugal, and do honor to the country we represent. Thirdly, remember that we are defending ourselves, our homes, our country. We are fighting to free ourselves. Fourthly and finally, have patience and courage!"

Then he jumped from the mule, knelt down before his banner that rolled above him in the wind, and prayed. One by one, the men of his command, to the very last man, dismounted and fell to his knees. Some wept, and many kissed the ground as if it were to be their grave. The picture was rather tragic than heroic.

From afar came the rumble of the advancing troops of Castile. The Portuguese rose, and the horsemen sprang into their saddles. Nuno, after adjusting his helmet which he had removed in

prayer, seized his lance from one of the pages and cried out:

"Friends, have confidence in me. God will help all those who assist me, *and He will demand of you the account of my death if I die here, in the center of this ring, through your fault.*"

Knowing their love for him, he had played this trump against all their fears!

His face was shining. He looked from one soldier to the other, affectionately, confidently, as though he knew that each single one would bring him through the battle safe. The men fairly vibrated under his glance. They forgot everything else but that he, their leader, was the hope of Portugal, and they had to protect him!

Suddenly and rudely the solemn silence was shattered by clamoring of trumpets echoing through the valley. An overwhelming shout rolled from five thousand approaching Castilians: *"Castile! Saint James!"*

The enemy advanced rapidly, even though the sun was high, flashing fire from their arms and armor.

"Portugal! Saint George!" Nuno's few troops shouted back, now steady at their posts, each man having suddenly—by Nuno's challenge—become an individual fighting unit.

The Castilian cavalry charged, certain of victory,

with no plan other than confidence of wiping out the Portuguese by sheer force.

On the very first impact, the Castilian horses were impaled on the front row of Portuguese lances, and as the Castilian troops piled up behind, a deadly rain of arrows and missiles of all description poured from Don Nuno's compact square to bring terrible carnage into the shocked Castilians. Immediate confusion resulted in their ranks, followed by terror. Seeing the leaders dead, the Castilians in the rear who had not expected to fight at all began to fall back, and then to flee wildly and ignominiously. At once Nuno ordered his horsemen to give chase. The Castilian infantry, having lost the protection of their own cavalry, was cut to pieces.

It was an overwhelming Portuguese victory.

The sun now shone only on Nuno and his men, masters of a field covered with dead, among whom were many of the foremost nobility of Spain.

vi

Nuno did not hesitate. He wanted to take advantage of his victory and to surprise the many pockets of Spanish-held parts of Portugal. He gathered his men, and left at once. Tirelessly, that same day, they won over the greater part of the surrounding cities and villages that still hesitated in their allegiance, and regained every one that was occu-

pied by a Spanish garrison. These latter gave only weak resistance when they saw Nuno and his men galloping triumphant towards their gates, and some surrendered at once without raising a sword.

This victory had a great influence on the outcome of the entire war. It immediately gave Don John, in Lisbon, his needed strength to knead Portugal into at least a semblance of free and national unity.

However, Nuno and Don John knew well that Castile could send another army. The King of Castile had thought it unnecessary to send even five thousand at first, but now he would send three times that number.

vii

On the following day Nuno walked barefoot from Monforte to Santa Maria de Assumar, a distance of six miles (over cobblestones and rough fields!). He wanted, in this manner, to show his Lady that he knew that She had won the victory that he had fought for Her.

When he arrived at the church, in Santa Maria de Assumar, he found it befouled and profaned; the Castilians had quartered their cavalry in it!

With his own hands Nuno silently swept out the entire church and tried to put it in order. Then he knelt and vowed to Our Lady that he would

erect, in thanksgiving and in reparation, a truly imposing temple in Her honor.

He did. This is one of the sanctuaries of Portugal today. And a similar sanctuary followed other great victories, one at Aljubarotta in honor of the Rosary, and the greatest of all in Lisbon, in honor of Our Lady of the Scapular.

At that time the devotions of the Rosary and the Scapular were popular as devotion in the United States is today through the Miraculous Medal. Almost everyone wore the Scapular and understood what it was. And people prayed the Rosary. The fervor with which these devotions were practiced was an indication of a person's spiritual life. The times were so wretched, with heresy rampant, papal schisms, universal wars, thievery and sensuality, that the great promises which Our Lady made over the Rosary and the Scapular were not only necessary inducements, but often seemed not enough.

As we look back at this period, as we witness the miracles of grace and of military and political victories all over Europe that followed the use of the Scapular and the Rosary, we can see that the Blessed Virgin had obtained from Her Son permission to fight the evils of the time, and to defeat them, by a very minimum of effort on the part of Her wandering children. She but needed their wills.

She but needed that they should turn to Her. Then She could do the rest.

In subsequent years, despite the reminders of Pope Leo XIII in his encyclicals on the Rosary, and this same Pope's appeal to all to wear the Scapular, followed by a similar appeal on the part of Pius IX, Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, many Catholics of today have forgotten the antidote to Universal War and Sin that Our Lady brought to the world in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. That is why Our Lady had to come down in 1917, Herself, at Fatima, where Blessed Nuno was to win a great and seemingly impossible victory under the banner of Her Scapular and with the prayer of the Rosary. There, after predicting World War II, of the nineteen forties, She would say: "If the world is consecrated to my Immaculate Heart—will take my Scapular and say my Rosary (She held them both in Her hands)—there will be peace."

But now we are ahead of our story.

viii

The King of Castile lost no time retaliating after Nuno's victory.

At once he sent about 15,000 troops, and the strong Castilian fleet, to lay seige to Lisbon.

Don John immediately sent for Nuno and asked him to go to Oporto and accompany a Portuguese

fleet that was being prepared to sail to the aid of the capital. On the way Nuno happened upon a great convoy of supplies that was going to the Castilians at Lisbon, and seized it.

The King of Castile tried now to bribe Nuno. He sent a Jewish banker, from Vallada, to offer Nuno one thousand doubloons if Nuno would stop fighting. Nuno, of course, repulsed the envoy with whole-souled contempt.

On his way, too, Nuno took possession of Montsaraz. He knew that food was lacking in the city and he had his men drive a herd of cows towards the gates. When the people ran out to capture the animals, Nuno sallied forth from his ambush and surrounded them. He then entered the city and subjected it to the power of Don John.

The Castilians tried every artifice with Nuno, either to gain him for themselves or to overcome him. But always in vain. While he was still in Evora, before going to Oporto, he learned that the Castilians had sent their famous warrior, Castanheda, to challenge him.

Nuno went out to meet Castanheda and defeated him and all his followers.

Twice, before he reached Oporto, Peter Sarmiento, the Marshal of Castile, absented himself from the siege of Lisbon to move against Nuno with an army of some twelve thousand men. Both times,

though Nuno had an army of less than six thousand, Sarmiento retreated without fighting. The thought that they had against them Nun'Alvarez, "the bravest of the brave" and "The Invincible," had proved too much for the Castilian soldiery. It was rumored among the men of Castile that Nuno had supernatural power. And Sarmiento could not risk defeat. Lisbon was more important.

Nuno continued to carry on his campaign with varying successes of high dramatic interest, all of which are to be found in the many histories of the Lusitanian kingdom. One after the other he took Pamella and Almada. Then one night, after having left Oporto, Nuno stole through the great Castilian fleet at Lisbon in a small boat and his arrival in the encircled city seemed like a miracle. The people acclaimed him rapturously, and with them was Don John, who went down even to the palace gate to greet him. When Nuno would have kissed the King's hand, Don John embraced him.

Nuno's first act was to hear Mass in the church of Our Lady of the Stairs.

His presence in the city revived the drooping spirits of the inhabitants who had been seriously depressed by the great suffering entailed by the siege. They were on the point of starvation. They could hardly believe that anyone could have pierced the blockade.

Not long afterwards, because of the resistance of the city and particularly because of pestilence that had spread among the Castilian troops and their knowledge that Nuno was in the city, the Castilian armies withdrew and the fleet left the harbor.

ix

However, a great part of Portugal still remained under the domination of Castile. Only the southern part had been freed.

In the many battles which followed, Nuno's brother Ferdinand was killed. He died during the night assault on Villa Viçosa, after which the Portuguese were forced to retire to Borba. From Borba Nuno sent for the corpse of his brother and with great sorrow laid it to rest in the church of Saint Francis of Estremoz. He had lost the brother whom he had come most to love, the only one who had been faithful to the Master of Aviz, to the freedom of their country.

War is not all adventure and glory.

Nuno still had his ready smile, however.

He held the keys to death's secret.

Although he had always prayed, he felt now that he had never really known the importance of closeness to God. What else but a good death, as far as any individual man was concerned, really mattered?

8

THE COUNT OF OUREM

On June 1, 1384, only a few months after the revolution and the subsequent defeats of the Portuguese in the south and at Lisbon, the following royal decree was issued. We quote it from the archives of the House of Braganza:

"Don John, by the grace of God the son of the most noble King Don Peter and Regent of the Kingdom of Portugal and of Algarve, makes donation to Don Nuno Alvarez Pereira of the County of Ourem with all the lands, villages and dependencies which appertain to the aforesaid County; moreover, of every property which the Count John Fernandes Andeiro possessed by what title soever, with Villa Viçosa, Borba, Estremoz, Evoramonta, etc. . . ."

The prophecy of the Armorer of Santarem, through a whirl of amazing events, had become reality.

ii

It is to be noted that in issuing this decree, Don John did not call himself "King." Although we have spoken of him under this title, Don John had never used it himself. He had no direct succession to the crown. After Leonora, it went to Beatrice. And even though neither Leonora nor Beatrice could wear the crown in a Portugal that was free of Castile, Don John felt that the people should decide whether or not he was to be the monarch. He would not assume this authority of himself.

This admission that authority rested in the governed, once the line of rightfully descended authority had been broken, was democracy. It was the thing which perhaps began a hundred and fifty years before in England, with the Magna Carta, and reached a peak four hundred years later in the Constitution of the United States of America.

It is surprising, and sometimes a shock to modern vanity, to realize that men are not so different, from one age to another. The chasm of centuries is only deep when we stand over it. When we rise above the earth, high into the sky, the chasm disappears, merging with the plains on either side. That is why history is important. That is why the manner in which Nuno Alvarez Pereira conducted himself in his wars of the late fourteenth century is important to us in the twentieth century.

One of Don John's first acts was to call a grand council at Coimbra to decide whether he should be merely an acting Regent of Portugal, until events clarified the succession, or whether he should be King. This council was to be made up of representatives of the people, chosen by them, and by the clergy.

The council was held in the spring of 1385 after a year of preparation. Don John went to Coimbra in the company of Nuno, the new Count of Ourem. His entrance into the city was the signal for bells to peal in all the churches, and the people thronged the streets to greet him. Before entering the city, however, both Don John and Nuno dismounted and devoutly kissed a crucifix held out to them by a waiting group of monks. Then, in a lengthy procession, they toured the city.

At the sessions of the council—where there were representatives, as we have said, of the clergy, the nobility, and the people—the discussions were long and animated. Should Don John be confirmed in the regency, or should he be proclaimed King? It was far from a clear decision.

Two men, by their eloquence, finally brought the vote to a deciding majority — in favor of making Don John their King. They were Doctor John das Ragas and Nuno.

On the sixth day of April, 1385, the Master of Aviz *officially* became King John I of free Portugal.

In the spirit of this first council, the monarchy at once took on a democratic character. The royal election itself, which was in disregard of every hereditary right, proceeded exclusively from the people. Moreover, the people were permitted to limit the sovereign power, which up to this time had been absolute.

Three succeeding Kings of Portugal maintained this pact of Coimbra. Perhaps there would have been no revolution in Portugal in the twentieth century, abrogating the monarchical form there, had this democratic system begun by Don John I been preserved through the years.

iii

Meanwhile, however, what had become of Lady Leonora Telles, widow of Ferdinand, who had gone to Santarem to await vindication of Andeiro's death and the usurpation of her regency?

As we have said, Don John offered to keep Leonora in her regency by marrying her himself, but she had refused. Moreover, now that the revolution had taken place, Leonora showed herself openly in favor of Castile, and of maintaining the old ascendancy of Castile over Portugal. The Castilian flag and the Portuguese flag—like the flag of Great

Britain and of Canada—were the same. Indeed, the relation of Portugal to Castile, at this time, was almost identical to the present relation of Canada to England. The great difference was that Portugal, unlike Canada, was not well governed. And there had been constant friction with the mother-country, Castile.

The King of Castile indeed went to Santarem, with Lady Beatrice (his wife), but after his triumphal entry into the city he placed a guard about Leonora to keep a constant and close watch on her. He had come to know of her treachery and inconstancy, and he excused the guard by telling Leonora that he was giving her an escort of honor.

This guard did not prevent Leonora Telles' intrigues. The wicked woman, seeing that the King of Castile was not going to fall altogether to her wiles, made a pact with Count Peter of Trastamara, a pretender to the throne of Castile through illegitimate royal descent. Having allured Count Peter, as she had once done to Andeiro, Leonora persuaded him to kill the King, and then marry her and proclaim themselves the sovereigns of Portugal. The plot was discovered and the culprits were brought before the King.

Wearied finally, the King of Castile caused Lady Leonora to be imprisoned in the monastery of Tordesillas. There, for twenty years she languished

petulant and wretched, until she died in the year 1405.

iv

After the Council of Coimbra, which echoed the English tradition of Magna Carta, the King of England recognized the sovereignty of the Master of Aviz, and contracted an alliance to aid him in the freeing of Portugal from the domination of Castile.

With the aid of forces that arrived in due time from England — an England which increasingly feared the rising power of the Spanish—the Portuguese turned seriously to the task of facing the enemy. All domestic problems were buried in the slogan: "Victory first!"

The Castilians had raised an army of more than thirty thousand men, excellently equipped. These thirty thousand men were reinforced by a secondary corps of many more thousands who carried supplies of fresh arms, food, medical men, engineers—a second army to aid an army. And these tremendous forces, like Grant later marching to Richmond, were beginning to make their way across Portugal. Before long they had reached Coimbra, from which the Council had to flee, and they were approaching Leiria (in the diocese of which Our Lady appeared, at Fatima, in 1917) with the intention of advancing upon Lisbon. They had sacked and razed every-

thing in their path: homes, villages, even churches. Everything had given way before them. Their advance was rather a march of triumph than an invasion.

When the Castilians had reached Leiria, Nuno sent word that they should turn back unless they wished to meet him in battle.

This was more than a gesture. Nuno was beginning a psychological warfare. He was sending his warning not to the King of Castile but to the thousands of Castilian soldiers to whom Nuno's very name was fearful.

v

Meanwhile the Castilians had struck terror into the hearts of the Portuguese, however, and in a special war council at Abrantes it was decided that rather than try to defeat this great Castilian army, Nuno should take advantage of their presence in Portugal to take his forces and attack Castile itself. This apparently good tactic was even suggested by Don John.

Nuno, however, disagreed with Don John and the council, even though he thereby made a great many enemies, including Doctor John das Regas. "I have heard your counsel," Nuno said, "but I feel that were I to leave Portugal, where I defend my country, to go to Castile, where I would be an invader,

that the Castilians would soon take Lisbon, and then come out and cut me off in Castile. And since I am the General, it is for me to decide."

With that, he rose, bowed to the King, and left the assembly.

The council could do nothing. They would have been lost without Nuno, who held the following of the troops. Das Regas pretended to rejoice at the young general's audacity, predicting that the presumptuous young knight would have his wings clipped.

Nuno decided to go at once, with the three thousand men he had at his disposal, to halt the Castilians before they got too far. He sent word to Don John that if the young monarch wished to join him, despite their differences of opinion as to how the campaign should be conducted, that he would be glad to have the Master of Aviz as one of his officers.

Don John went.

vi

Don John I of Castile was a year younger than Don John I of Portugal. This King of Castile was rather short and heavy set, of melancholy aspect. He was of excellent character but of exceedingly mild disposition—excellent in a subject but needing added, forceful virtues in a King. He was not a

good leader. He lacked both forcefulness and prudence. He often changed his mind, and was more prone to listen to the flattery of selfish courtiers than to the counsel of his statesmen. He held long and frequent councils, and usually did what he himself had planned before the council convened.

This regal weakness in the King, together with constant weakness of health, made him restless, taciturn, unhappy. Often racked with fever, he had to follow his army on a litter.

Knowing this, Nuno felt somewhat compensated for being outnumbered four to one in men, and even more in matériel.

Nuno sent his message to the King of Castile at Leiria, because that was the part of Portugal Nuno knew well. It was there that he had ridden as a boy, exploring every cave and brook, every woodland pass.

Hastening there with his army, Nuno took up his position at Aljubarrota, on an elevation where the Castilian army would pass between two deep and fast-flowing streams, thus gaining a tremendous advantage of position.

The great and decisive battle of the war was about to be fought. There had been many clashes of arms, many cities taken, many skirmishes between Portuguese and Castilian patrols which we have not mentioned. All had contributed to the

great pitch of excitement that gripped the contending forces as the climactic conflict approached.

When the Castilian army neared Aljubarrota, somewhat ahead of the second army with its reinforcements and supplies, the counsellors of the King of Castile urged him to wait for the reinforcements. But Don John, seeing a chance to take Nuno off guard by sending a tremendous force of cavalry to flank Nuno's forces, was impetuous to give battle and gave immediate orders.

It was August 14, 1385, at dawn. The Vigil of the Assumption.

Nuno and his men were fasting in preparation for Our Lady's great feast. They rose before the sun to attend Masses being said throughout the camp. Many of the men went to Holy Communion (which, in those days, was infrequent). With the rising of the sun, the Castilians appeared, and the call to battle was sounded.

All day, almost until sundown, the Castilians maneuvered for position. Nuno had about eight thousand men; the Castilians had over thirty thousand.

In arranging his troops, Nun'Alvarez deliberately chose for himself, personally, the most dangerous position. His white banner—that had already seen the triumph of Atoleiros—flaming with the red of the Cross, undulated over his head. To all who

looked at it it seemed a promise of victory. On the ground, beneath the waving emblem, the General finally knelt in fervent prayer. As a pledge of his gratitude, he said to His Lady in Heaven, "I shall erect a temple on this very spot for you after the victory."

As the battle appeared imminent, towards evening, Nuno rose and held up his hand to command silence.

"To flee," he said seriously, addressing a much larger and different army than the one at Atoleiros, "would be certain death. Fight therefore we must, like heroes. Stand firm with your lances at rest until the enemy attacks. Then we shall drive them back, and the victory shall be yours!"

Almost as he was speaking, a tremendous roar, like thunder, broke from thousands of Castilian throats. *A ellos! A ellos!* — "At them! At them!"

The shrill cries of the trumpets sounded in desperate appeal. The clanging metal of the armor mingled with the furious stamping of galloping horses. The vanguard of the Castilian cavalry, with colorful banners streaming in the wind, rushed headlong, at a furious gallop, against the waiting quadrangle of Portuguese. It was just six o'clock in the evening.

"Portugal! Saint George!"

The cry of Nuno's troops was hurled back. Steady,

seemingly fearless, they stood up under the shock of the careening phalanx.

Charging into the stubborn formation of the Portuguese, the Castilians' ranks were broken and became lost in irregular masses. The horses, rushing in their fury upon the thicket of inclined lances, were stricken to the ground. Their maddened riders hurled themselves down upon the foe. Disordered though they were, they almost broke through the line.

Then, however, the two wings of Portuguese cavalry rushed forward. They hurled themselves into the breach. With them was a part of the rearguard commanded by the King himself. Thus they kept their fortress of flesh and blood intact, like an unshaken wall opposing the wave of Castilians.

On both sides men fought like lions. Axes, swords, rapiers, circled in tremendous blows. Arrows whistled through the air. Lance clashed on lance and burst in splinters. The very stumps became weapons of attack or defence in the hands of those heroic warriors. The peer of Portuguese poets, Louis of Camoes, writes:

"Their forceful volleys out the cross-bows pour
And clouds are darkened with the arrowy shower;
And yet, foam reeking o'er their wavy mane,
The snorting coursers rage and paw the plain.
Beat by their iron hoofs the plain rebounds,

As distant thunder through the mountains sounds."
(From W. J. Mickle's translation of Camoes' *Lusiades:* Geo. Bell & Sons; New York, 1892.)

Nuno, his flaming sword—the one that had been tempered by the prophetic armorer of Santarem and bore his Lady's name—flashed here and there. Fearlessly the General pushed himself through the troops, shouting encouragement, fighting brilliantly. Each moment brought either a fresh threat or a fresh opportunity, and Nuno lived each moment as he had never lived any other moments of his life. Comparing him to a lion, Camoes sings of him:

"Yet, firm and undismayed great Nunio stands
And braves the tumult of surrounding bands.
So, from high Ceuta's rocky mountains stray'd,
A raging lion braves the shepherd's shade.
The shepherds, hast'ning o'er the Tetuan plain,
With shouts surround him and with spears restrain.
He stops, with grinning teeth his breath he draws,
It is not fear, but rage that makes him pause."

Among the Castilians were many of those Portuguese who had stood against the separation of Portugal from Castile. Yet Portuguese or Castilian, those in the first lines fell under the shower of blows. Atoleiros was being repeated. As the leaders fell, the Portuguese quadrangle seemed rather a slaughter-

house than a fortress, with the shrieks of dying men, the field slippery with blood, and the carnage continuing as the Castilians advanced. Finally the spirit of the Castilian rear guard broke at the fearful sight. Despite the orders of the nobles to advance, they halted, and began to hedge slowly backward. When this happened, their left wing, under the command of the Prior of Crate (Nuno's brother, Don Peter Alvarez), made a frantic charge. But the charge was not only useless; it made matters worse. It ended in the impaling of the horses on Portuguese lances, because Nuno saw the charge coming and deployed a group of reserve infantry to meet it, and the violent hand-to-hand conflict that ensued only added to the confusion.

The Castilian rear troops then broke in open flight, and in their flight overwhelmed and dragged with them the vast reinforcements which had begun to arrive.

The King of Castile had foreseen a repulse, similar to that at Atoleiros, and his tactic was to attack the Portuguese quadrangle from the rear with a force of several thousand cavalry, under the Grand Master of Alcantara. But Nuno had foreseen this in the maneuvering, and he had lances ready in the rear as well as in the front. After the hand-to-hand fighting had begun in the front, with his men in the center of the quadrangle raining arrows and lances

into the Castilians as they piled up on each other, Nuno galloped to the rear to conduct the defence there. His presence everywhere was an inspiration to his men.

Soon the joyful and triumphant cry was running from one Portuguese mouth to the other: "They flee! They flee!" And as night fell, the victorious Portuguese quadrangle broke in violent pursuit of a defeated enemy.

The Castilian infantry, which had not even engaged in the combat, followed the disastrous rout of the cavalry and left behind all arms, baggage, supplies, fleeing towards Leiria whence they had come that morning.

The vanquished King, wretched and feverish, was placed upon a mule and repaired in desolation to Santarem.

The Portuguese losses were unbelievably few.

Among the Castilian dead were many of the first nobility, including the brave Master of Santiago and the two Pereiras, Don Peter and Don Diego.

Nuno had killed two of his brothers, like Italian-American soldiers fighting in Italy in 1943, or German-American soldiers fighting in Germany in 1945.

All was not glory and adventure in war.

9

TO OUR LADY OF THE SCAPULAR AND OF THE ROSARY

"THE RESULT of Aljubarrota," writes the historian Oliveira, "was lightning-like, even as a thrust to the heart."

The conquered King retired from Portugal with his army, vowing however to return and to punish Nun'Alvarez and his rebels.

Four days later Nun'Alvarez made a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Our Lady in Ourem, thus setting foot for the first time in his own county. Later he had a votive church erected there.

King John, having caught Nuno's spirit of devotion and gratitude to Our Lady, made a pilgrimage on foot to the Madonna of Oliveira in Guimarâes. And he erected at Aljubarrota the great memorial church to Our Lady of Victory. Today, celebrated as the *Monumento da batalha,* this great church is considered one of the most beautiful Gothic achieve-

ments in the world, and the most beautiful in Portugal. It is a poem in stone, in which the Portuguese soul has written the religious spirit and devotion and gratitude towards Mary that filled it on the day of its liberation.

The royal decree for the erection of this famous church reads:

"Don John I, by the grace of God, King of Portugal . . . .

"To all who see this church we wish to make known that in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Protectress of ourselves and of our kingdom, and in consideration of the many and admirable graces that have been ever received from Her Divine Son through Her intercession, whether in preservation of our life, in the exaltation of our kingdom, or in the wars in which we have engaged, and especially in the battle fought with the Castilians (wherein there was given to us a marvelous victory, more through Her mercy than our merits), we have determined in memory of all these benefits received from Her to build and erect a temple wherein, together with the honor and praise of Our Lady, divine service may be held . . . ."

The splendid temple arose in all its grandeur and was entrusted to the Order of Saint Dominic, the Order to which Mary had entrusted Her Rosary.

The façade of the *Monumento da batalha* is rich

with spires and lacy fretwork. The main portal is breath-taking work, crowned by three rows of saints in stone. The interior of the basilica is divided into three majestic naves under towering, graceful vaults, and the light streams in color through great, ogival windows. At the right of the visitor, as he enters, is the chapel of the founder and there, in elegant sepulchres, repose the bodies of Don John and of all his children.

Not far distant—only two miles down the road that leads to Lisbon—there is a more modest chapel, erected to Saint George. It was built by Nuno, on the very spot where he knelt to pray, and his men knelt to pray with him. It stands as a reminder of the counsel he gave: that in every undertaking, whether public or private, God is the best ally.

ii

Though the battle of Aljubarrota was the turning of the tide, it was not the end of the war. It was like the defeat of the Japanese fleet in the battle of Sarego Straits, in 1944. It was like the successful bridgehead in Normandy, in 1944. It crippled. It promised ultimate victory. But it was not the end.

Nuno divided his army into two parts. Don John led one towards the north of Portugal, and Nuno led the other towards the south.

But before they separated, in his glow of gratitude

to Nuno the young King not only confirmed him in the titles of Count of Ourem and of Barcellos, but increased these already precious endowments with other rich domains. One might almost say that he divided his kingdom with Nuno.

This, when peace finally came, was to lead to the greatest trial of Nuno's life.

iii

After departing from Santarem and from Don John, Nuno set out for Evora, reducing all pockets of Castilian government in the cities along the way. Then, at Evora, he gathered about him a small army—little more than one thousand horsemen and about two thousand infantry, according to one account; another account *(Chronica do Condestabre)* lessens the number of cavalry but says the infantry was much more.

With this comparative handful, Nuno sent word to the Spaniards that until they made an armistice and guaranteed the freedom of Portugal, he would carry the war to their own territory.

It was not right, as Nuno saw it, for the civilians of Portugal to do all the starving, to be deprived and needy and forced to witness destruction of their orchards and farms. If the Castilians still wanted the war, they would have at least the end of it in their own yard.

On the second of October he entered Spain from Badajoz and, one after the other, took Almendral, Parra, Zafra, Fuente del Maestre, Usagre, and Villa Garcia. At Parra he picked up the trail of the Castilian troops. So he again divided his army, and taking only his personal troops, he followed the enemy. It was not his intention to give battle, since he had only three hundred lances, but he wanted to keep the foe in sight, to harass their rear guard, and to draw them to attack him because of his small numbers. Then, as soon as they attacked and engaged him in battle, the larger part of his army would be waiting to fly to surprise the enemy from the rear. It was similar to the strategy used by Napoleon at Waterloo, but failed because Napoleon's reinforcements did not arrive in time.

Nuno did not have long to wait.

At Villa Garcia, the General of the Castilian armies, Barbuda, dispatched a herald to challenge Nuno to battle. It was the customary *"Prendre Garde!"*.

Barbuda did not speak solely for himself. He had been joined by the Masters of Calatrava and Santiago, by the Counts of Niebla and Medina Coeli, and by the Lords of Marcheno and Aguilar, and others. All had joined for the kill.

Having presented the bearer of the challenge with

a handsome sum, Nuno sent back his own challenge.

And he sent word to the rest of his army.

The enemy was waiting for Nuno at Valverde. They outnumbered him tremendously, and this time it was they who had the advantage of position. They had taken positions on the elevated ground, and forced Nuno to cross the Guadiana river in order to take a place opposite them.

Barbuda's forces were not there.

They had circled about and followed Nuno, and the young Portuguese General, with only a handful of men, was caught between two mighty armies.

Nuno prayed as never before. The prospect had not been darker even at Atoleiros.

He quickly formed his men in a closed square, deciding to charge the enemy on the elevations, and then to fight Barbuda from that vantage point. He had no time to lose. Barbuda was approaching. He shouted the order, and his men started forward, compact as a walking fortress. They steadily crossed the river, continually filling the places of those who fell under the rain of arrows and lances being poured into their midst. Scarcely had they reached the opposite bank than the fierce battle began.

Nuno was continually moving about, sustaining his men, fighting, issuing orders. He had his usual supreme confidence. He knew that his Lady in

Heaven would give them victory. His men caught that feeling. So did the enemy.

At the peak of the battle, a recorder says that arrows, darts, stones, lances formed a seeming solid of glittering scales in motion over the hill which Nuno's men were taking. Below this flashing confusion of missiles, the air vibrated with the confused rumble of oaths, clashing arms, splintering lances, thuds of stones, groans of the wounded and the cries of the dying.

A dart pierced Nuno's foot. The blood began to run and to course across the belly of his steaming charger. He paid no attention to it. The rear guard was yielding. Barbuda had arrived. Nuno hurried to help, issuing new orders, shouting new victory cries. He revived the flagging spirits of his men, strengthened their halting courage, and was away again.

iv

They were calling from the vanguard.

Nuno had disappeared.

Meanwhile the advance guard of the Portuguese was giving way under the tremendous pressure of the enemy. The vague fear of defeat began to rise. All through their fighting mass the question ran: "Where is Nun'Alvarez? Has he been killed?"

Officers left their places to search, fear clutching

at their hearts. All through the quadrangle they worked, calling to each other.

They could not find him. They could not find his body.

The enemy knew. They were closing in.

Then suddenly Ruy Conçalves also disappeared. He had been searching for Nuno, and now he himself was gone.

He was gone—because he had found Nuno. The general was kneeling in prayer between two great blocks of stone. His hands were joined and his eyes raised up to Heaven. On his breast hung a precious reliquary of the King of Castile, which had been a part of the spoils at Aljubarrota. It contained a thorn from the crown of Our Lord.

When Ruy Conçalves came upon Nuno, the general was so absorbed that it seemed to Ruy that he was in ecstasy. At a little distance stood a page, holding the bridle of Nuno's charger and guarding his lance and armlet.

Nuno's radiant face told Conçalves clearly the great commander was speaking with his God. How that ecstatic recollection and reverence contrasted with the tumult of the battle! Perhaps it was at that very moment that Nun'Alvarez was promising, in his gratitude, to erect the magnificent monument to Our Lady of the Scapular, the Carmel in Lisbon. At any rate, some do say that this was the pact

contracted there, in the midst of battle, between the grand knight and his Lady.

Recovering from his surprise, Ruy Conçalves cried out in grief:

"We are lost!"

The general looked up distractedly. Then he replied calmly, "My friend, it is not yet time. Wait a bit."

And he continued to pray, as though the immediate disaster of his troops was far away.

Meanwhile others found their way to the spot. Among them was a very rough and worldly man, Gonçalo Annes. "Enough of prayer!" Annes shouted, glowering as though he suspected Nuno of sudden cowardice. "We are dying—all!"

"My friend," Nuno answered as he had before, "it is not yet time."

But his troops were falling into despair. They were even then on the very verge of panic and ignominious flight.

Suddenly Nuno grasped the helmet beside him and rose. He winced, and shifted his weight from the dart-pierced foot. Then hobbling to his equerry, he grasped his arms and was helped into the saddle.

The battle was raging in full fury. On the crest of the hill, waving before their anxious eyes in the blue sky, flowed the banner of the Master of Santiago. Nuno put his left hand on the shoulder of

his standard-bearer, Diego Gil, and pointing with his right to the fluttering Santiago ensign he cried:

"We must go up there with mine!" Then, leading the way, he cried loudly to his men: "Forward! Each man must fight for four!"

His sudden appearance among the men seemed to them like a resurrection. The battle seemed to come to a sudden pause in the astonishment and mixed feelings that gripped Portuguese and Castilian alike. "Forward!" Nuno was crying. "Each man for four!"

Taking up his enthusiasm, filled with a new and wild hope, the Portuguese surged forward behind his banner and the frightened Castilians, more than ever convinced that Nuno had more than physical powers, began to give way.

The Portuguese fought and finally routed their enemy with almost incredible violence.

The hill was taken.

The Grand Master of Santiago remained dead on the hill, and the Castilian leaders who had managed to escape fled in fear and bewilderment through the countryside. The multitude of simple Castilian soldiers concealed themselves among the great stones and caves, wherever they could, wherever they might be hidden from the Portuguese.

Nuno spent the night at Valverde. The leadership of the Castilians had been so completely broken

that they could not reorganize for a counterattack. Their armies were in precipitous flight.

And thus ended the war between a nascent Portugal and powerful Castile, the Castile that would soon change its name to the empire of Spain and one hundred years later reach to an empire across the seas, beyond a free Portugal.

v

After the defeat of his armies within his own borders, the King of Castile knew that Portugal was lost to Spain. His wife, Beatrice, was the rightful successor to the Portuguese throne. But with Portugal so powerful, might it not be that Castile would become the subject? Might it not be that the old military and political relations of the two countries would be reversed?

After Valverde, Nuno kept on the offensive. Meanwhile Don John, in Lisbon, contracted a new alliance with England—the England that feared a too powerful Spain. Don John urged the Duke of Lancaster, who had been promised the hand of Beatrice, to urge his pretensions to the throne of Castile.

The Castilian King, seeing his throne threatened, invoked the aid of France and of the antipope at Avignon. And he ordered general public mourning, including prayers and fasts and processions, that

lasted two years. The pride of the great Spanish nation was deeply wounded by defeat at the hands of a mere band of rebels. And long years passed before they could fully accept this defeat, before they realized that Portugal itself wanted to be a free nation, a nation that would crown its own independence with the greatness of better government and wonderful maritime discoveries.

In 1387, Don John of Portugal was dispensed from his vows in the Order of Aviz, and married Lady Philippa, daughter of the Duke of Lancaster. And in Castile, Prince Henry—who two years later was to inherit the throne when Don John of Castile died—married another daughter of the Duke of Lancaster.

And thus, in 1390, the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain came to lasting peace by marriage into the same English family.

v

One is almost tempted to say: "And they lived happily ever after."

But one can rarely say that, according to the world's standards, in the life of a Saint. And this *is* the life of Nuno Alvarez Pereira, whom God had destined to have the only greatness that is enduring: greatness of soul.

Nuno, now at the peak of his achievements, was

about to climb new peaks in the greatest trial of his life—with threat not only to himself but to the men who had loved him and risked their lives under him, and with threat of self-exile from the country for which he had bled. Nuno was about to take up his cross.

At this time Nuno began, in Lisbon, the greatest monument of his life, the thanksgiving shrine promised to his Lady in Heaven for victory over Castile. It was the imposing shrine and monastery to Our Lady of the Scapular of Mount Carmel, a magnificent testimonial not only to the piety and Marian love of Portugal's hero and wealthiest landowner, but also to the splendor to which art had then attained in Portugal.

Nuno had fought for his Lady. He had carried Her token in battle, and drawn his strength from the bond of unity with Mary effected by it. And now he gave Her this monument in thanks.

His Lady in Heaven was not to be outdone in generosity. She had rewarded his devotion to Her in earlier life by inspiring him with high ideals, by preserving him from the sinfulness of the court, by drawing him to a deep love of the Blessed Sacrament, by—in a word—keeping and bringing him ever closer to God.

Now She was going to do more. As we shall see,

She was going to return Nuno's gift a thousandfold. Nuno's soul was to flare to new fires of Divine Love.

vi

The year before the peace, Nuno's wife died. Nuno hastened to her side and was able to be present at the last moments.

He had loved the Lady Eleonora d'Alvim. The three years he had spent with her in the tranquility of Pedrassa had been, perhaps, the happiest of his life. No one had ever been as close to him as she. No one had known him so intimately, had admired him so deeply, or loved him so much. And during the many, many long months of battle, when she never saw him, she was constantly with him in spirit, praying for him. Historians say that although at home, during the wars, adulations were poured upon her by *all* the people and nobility of Portugal because of her husband's achievements, she remained ever humble, and only prayed that he might save Portugal, and come back to her.

God answered her prayer. Nuno did come back. And he had freed Portugal.

Taking the dying Lady Eleonora into his arms, we can be sure that Nuno told her that their parting was but for a moment, that they would soon be together again, forever, in a lasting Kingdom. They were united to the Lady of Heaven, the Queen of

the angels, by Her Scapular token; they had Her promise of a place together. They *knew,* despite their unworthiness, that by the Queen's own word they had not lost the only battle on earth that counts—the battle against the world, the flesh, the devil.

After Lady Eleonora's death, Nuno took his little daughter, Beatrice, to Lisbon and entrusted her to his mother, Lady Irene, who had come on from the court in Castile. He was then twenty-seven years old.

"Dearest Lady," he said in prayer to his Lady in Heaven, "I once promised not to marry, but to live and to do and to die for you alone. I thank you for my days with Eleonora. I now consecrate the rest of my days, once again, completely and entirely to thee. I shall not marry."

vii

The new Queen—the daughter of the Duke of Lancaster who had married Don John—had a mania for arranging marriages. It was a part of her campaign to check the libertinism of the Portuguese nobility. She labored constantly to draw the Portuguese nobility into marital matches. And as soon as Nuno became Portugal's most eligible widower, she decided that Lady Beatrice of Castre, daughter of the Count of Pieres de Castre, would be the right match for Nuno. And she used every

persuasion imaginable to convince Nuno of the excellence of her choice.

"My lady," Nuno finally replied to the Queen, not wishing to give his true motive, "that I might offer the hand of a spouse to Lady Beatrice, it needs must be disarmed. And affairs do not yet permit me to abandon the sword."

This was somewhat true, because although peace followed a year later, it was only wisdom for little Portugal to retain its army until the peace was assured.

viii

The loss of his wife was a great sorrow to Nuno. It was perhaps greater even than the loss of his brothers.

Though but twenty-seven years of age, the general seemed unseasonally aged. He had become thinner, his cheeks had hollowed, his nose seemed pinched, more pointed than ever.

Yet there was a new nobility in that face, a new depth to the carmel brown eyes, a greater calm, immovability, certitude, obliviousness to petty trials.

Nuno was now ready for the Divine Surgeon to cut the last strings to earth, the last strings that held parts of Nuno's heart from that Divine and Jealous Lover.

10

TRIAL

DURING THE eleven years following declaration of truce, Nuno remained with the army.

Then, out of his great humility and generosity, came the seeds of a glorious trial.

Since these soldiers had made the victories possible, Nuno felt that his men were the ones who deserved the gifts bestowed on him by the King. And he proceeded to divide his vast counties and estates among his officers and soldiers.

This kindness of Nuno increased his place in the affections of the people beyond all bounds. But the jurists in Lisbon, who saw landed estates going to men of few letters and who had done nothing but risk their lives, rebelled. They were led by the already jealous Das Regas.

They convened and connived. They would bring Nuno to trial. They would disgrace him, punish him.

There was nothing in Nuno's actions that could

be accused, unless one can accuse patriotism, unfailing fidelity to duty, generosity, noblesse oblige.

That was it! "Noblesse Oblige!" Nuno was assuming to himself, in giving away counties that had been entrusted to him, a right that was held by the King alone. Nuno was making himself equal to the King! He was a traitor, a usurper! The fact that he was given land to govern did not entitle him to appoint a new governor!

ii

The King was persuaded. The evidence was overwhelming. All the jurists agreed that Nuno, by giving away his property as he had done, had indeed assumed aristocratic sovereignty.

But rather than hurt Nuno, and recognizing the motives that prompted the jurists, the King sent for Nuno, explained the charge, and said that the Crown was willing to redeem all the lands with money, or by new and authentic grants.

Nuno was shocked when the King told him of the charge.

"No, your Highness," he said, "it would not be right for the Crown to make such an expenditure to right a wrong that was never committed. I cannot take back the lands that I have given, because this would be a betrayal of trust. But neither can these jealous jurors take them away. And I, for

my part, cannot give up something that is no longer mine. I will tell the jurors this myself."

iii

The scene in court was a furious one. The jurors welcomed Nuno, certain that they could trap him and make his plight even worse.

Nuno knew enough to have adequate counsel. He fought the jurists on their own ground, with their own weapons.

But they defeated him.

Being a man of action, Nuno gathered his soldiers together at Alemtejo and told them what had happened.

"Rather than submit to such an injustice," he cried, "I am going into voluntary exile, and I invite any who feel as I do to follow me."

In a body, his entire army placed itself at his side. And soon they were on the march towards the border.

It is hard to say what feelings gripped at Nuno's heart. Was this the gratitude of his nation for what he had done, first in fighting for its freedom and second in democratically dividing the lands that had been given to him as his own? Was the King so weak that he would allow the congress to impose an injustice? And would the congress feel that it had achieved its vile purpose when he had gone,

and his men with him? Where would he go? To Castile? How would he feed the men?

"Dear Lady in Heaven," he prayed, "I never needed your help as I do now. Guide me. I place my confidence in your intercession. Never has it been known, dearest Lady and Mother, that anyone who fled to thy intercession . . ."

He had not reached the border before he was overtaken by envoys from King John.

"Please come back," the message read. "There shall be no talk of confiscating the lands. I, by my royal authority, sanction whatever grants you have made."

Victorious once again, this time without battle, Nuno retraced the road to Alemtejo, rejoicing with his men.

In due order the donations made by Nuno were officially declared valid by order of the King and the lands that Nuno had reserved for himself were retained by him with right of succession. Everything, of course, was to remain under the supreme dominion of the Crown, that thus the rights of all might be preserved.

iv

We have already seen how Our Lady returned Nuno's devotion to Her by enriching his soul with many virtues, inspiring him to chastity and gen-

erosity, humility and love of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

In battle he would kneel and pray fearlessly, heedless of the opinion of his followers or of his enemies.

After battles he erected monuments to God, through Our Lady and the Saints.

He gave his goods to the poor.

He was chaste. Even though it was not given to him to fully realize his vow of celibacy, this omission became the occasion for him to prove himself a model of chastity for every state of life, whether virgin, spouse, or widower.

This fact is attested by the chronicles of the times—particularly the *Agiologio Lusitano*. In a nobleman of those days, such chastity was a cause for wonder. But Nuno was its fearless champion. More than once he said to his soldiers: "The soldier is the better fighter who holds his passions in check. He who has no esteem for the angelic virtue enters the combat with half of the victory already yielded to the enemy."

Nuno had the gift of prayer, under any circumstances, even the most unusual. Often in the dead of night, while all in the encampment slept, Nuno arose in his tent to pray. And we have seen him praying in the midst of battle.

As for his charity—there is the time he was mak-

Great spiritual power is already being unleashed in the world from the hearts of those who have embraced the new and divine holiness. At the threshold of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart, the Apostolate of Fatima bears a major responsibility in helping the world cross that threshold into this time of great spiritual power, this time of triumph of the mystery of redemption.

But we are only at the threshold.

The door is the Immaculate Heart. It is opened by the *totus tuus* consecration. When one is *truly* living in, by, and with Mary, one is already close to living in the Divine Will as She did.

Blue Army Pledge, the Threshold

St. Grignion De Montfort distinguished three phases of response:[53]

The first is that of ordinary practicing Catholics: "Fulfilling our Christian duties, avoiding mortal sin, acting more out of love than fear, praying to Our Lady now and then, honoring Her as Mother of God but without any special devotion to Her."

The second phase is the threshold to the door of Our Lady's Heart. St. Grignion de Montfort described it over three hundred years ago, and it is exactly the Fatima pledge.

The very words of the saint, written over three hundred years ago, distinguish this second phase with: "*The Rosary and the Scapular...honor Mary's images and altars, publish Her praises and enroll in Her Sodalities* (associations dedicated to Her, such as the Blue Army)."

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[53] *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, numbers 23-24.

The next phase, the door leading to the new and divine holiness, the saint describes as "known and practiced by very few persons. It consists in giving one's self entirely to Mary, and to Jesus through Mary, and after that *to do all that we do through Mary, with Mary, in Mary and for Mary.*"

It is so important a step in one's life that the saint suggests a thirty-three-day preparation for this act of total consecration, which may obtain for the soul the Grace of living in the Divine Will through Mary's life in the Divine Will. He says:

"This devotion is an easy, short, perfect and secure way of attaining union with Our Lord, in which union the perfection of a Christian consists. It is an easy way because it is the way which Jesus Himself trod in coming to us" (no. 152).

All our loose-ended concerns for the future of the Fatima Apostolate, and for the holiness of its religious communities and leaders, relate to our hopes for this new and glorious age of the fullness of Redemption.

The "specific response" given at Fatima is not only to save man from self-destruction, it is also to bring mankind into the era of spiritual triumph, the era of the new and divine holiness.

Msgr. Harold Colgan, in asking his parishioners in 1947 to make the pledge, asked that they wear an outward sign of blue, as a reminder to themselves and others, of their pledge. He thus challenged them to be "*The Blue Army of Our Lady*," and that is how the Apostolate of Fatima received this name.

The Outward Sign

It is enough to wear a blue ribbon, but special pins are available. Those most commonly used

a time in some city or castle, Nuno immediately inscribed himself in the confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and if the confraternity was not established in that particular place, he established it. And he always ordered the Feast of Corpus Christi celebrated in greatest splendor, even when he was at war. Once while encamped in Spanish territory at Villa de Burgillos, he ordered the Feast kept with greatest solemnity and in the same manner as was the custom before the war. To the wonder of the Castilians, Nuno and all his officers followed the Blessed Sacrament, in procession, on foot, accompanied by music and chanting. Nuno's remark was typical: "All this solemnity is little compared to the honor due to the King of Kings who was thus passing through the city streets."

v

Little wonder, then, that when Nuno returned from his incipient self-exile, victorious over the jurists in behalf of the common people, he became perhaps one of the greatest idols any nation has ever had.

Despite the partitioning of his land, there was still so much left from that which King John had given him—and which he could no longer divide—that he was the richest noble in the realm. A great part of the entire kingdom came under his suze-

rainty. So high was his station that he was entitled to almost regal honors.

Then, as never before, did his alliance to his Lady in Heaven bear fruit.

After being told that She was to be Mother to the Messiah, Queen of the Universe, Our Blessed Mother hastened to do an act of charity to a needy cousin, and said but one thing of Herself: "My soul doth magnify the Lord because He had regarded the humility of His handmaid."

Nuno's new, high position became the occasion for those three acts: magnification of God; charity; and humility.

Our Lady had so enriched him that he had already begun to live as "Another Mary," and the Trinity was pleased.

He sought as much as possible to escape all marks of deference. He shrank from any distinctions. Only when there was question of recognizing in in him the authority that he represented did he, himself, admit it. He would not permit numerous attendants to occupy themselves excessively about his person, or to accompany and add glory to his going and coming. He gave to the poor with his own hand, and with such an expression of interest and warmth that it seemed that he was but one of them. And he gave with such tact and care that it seemed rather that the poor favored him than

that he favored them. He also accepted invitations to act as sponsor at the baptism of children. As he himself expressed it: "I see in each infant a creature justified, and within the Church another child capable of giving honor to God."

His riches were used primarily in magnifying God by the building and enriching of churches, and in helping the poor.

He gave always, and he gave much, not out of liberality common to great lords, but because he was inspired by truly fraternal love. In every man he recognized the image of Jesus Christ. That was obvious from the way he gave. A certain percentage of his revenues was alloted to charity, to provide apparel to the needy, to give grain gathered in years of abundance so that absolutely no one went without bread. During one period of scarcity, he came to the aid of more than four hundred Castilians who had brazenly settled in Estremadura. An historian says: "He did not consider himself the proprietor of his treasures, but only as their depositary. He was accustomed to say that the poor are the treasure-chest of the rich, and that no other act could better deserve God's mercy than care for God's poor."

Besides the votive shrines which Nuno built, already known to the reader, there are those which Nuno erected to Our Lady of Martyrs, in Estremoz,

and the churches at Souzel, Portel, Monsaraz, Monrâo and Evora. At Villa Vicosa he built a temple in honor of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, a devotion that increased until Portugal became known as "The Land of Mary," and the "Immaculate Conception" was chosen as its Queen. Of the imposing Lisbon shrine of Carmel—Nuno's greatest—we shall have more to say.

Most of these churches, either built or restored by Our Lady's Knight, were also liberally endowed by him in Her honor. For each he established an annual income to have Solemn Masses celebrated at the high altar in honor of Mary.

To insure diligence in the care of the holy tabernacle, the little earth-house of Our Lord, Nuno gave generous alms toward lamps and candles. Anything that detracted from the attention and honor due to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament grieved him greatly, and when he saw a lamp before the tabernacle unlighted, the sacred vessels carelessly kept, churches unclean, he was moved to correct them himself.

In all these things Nuno showed himself possessed of the deepest compassion and charity.

But there was one thing in which Nuno showed himself the warrior, exacting and severe. That one thing was the meting out of justice, with unfailing fairness. Relations and friends were the very first

to feel it if they departed from the norms of duty or even of propriety. His severity was such that, in a short while, the corrupt manners favored by the successive wars and the evil example of the previous court were everywhere amended. Nuno achieved this partly through renewal of the religious spirit, partly through fear of his chastisements unremittingly administered to noble and peasant alike.

Few there were who did not the more admire and love him.

vi

Our Lady had only begun to enrich Her Knight. She had imparted to him, in these passing years of quasi-sovereignty, only a shadow of Her virtues in comparison to the depth of Divine Love yet in store for him.

But there was one obstacle in the way: Nuno's attachment to his daughter, Beatrice.

Lady Irene, Nuno's mother, because of advanced age, felt that her destiny was already complete, and was preparing for a holy death. But at this time of which we now speak Lady Beatrice was in the full vigor of young womanhood. Four years before she had become the wife of King John's own son, the Infante Don Alfonso.

King John, knowing Nuno's affection for his daughter, had desired to give even this proof of his

own affection for Nuno. Thus he had joined Nuno to his own royal family.

On the occasion of this wonderful marriage, the King gave his son vast lands, with many cities and castles. Among them were all the possessions which had been confiscated from Don Gonçalo Telles, the brother of the deceased Queen Leonora; the County of Barcellos was likewise included. Nuno, on his part, with the approval of the King, made donation of many other fiefs and properties of his own.

The nuptials were celebrated with regal pomp at Leiria. Some time afterwards the new spouses, now Lord and Lady of the most extensive possessions in the north of the kingdom, departed for their domains.

(Later, through the nomination of the Infante Don Alfonso as Duke of Braganza, there arose from this union a new Portuguese dynasty. It was this dynasty which gave sovereigns—among them the Emperor Charles V—to almost all the states of Europe.)

Nuno was very happy. His country was free, united, peaceful. He was in a position to honor God and His Lady with regal hand, to practice universal charity, to lead many souls to His Beloved Lord in the tabernacle. And he was so proud of Beatrice! Lady Beatrice! Daughter-in-law of a King!

Nuno was settling into a pattern of sanctity, with but few reservations. Had things gone on as they were, and had Nuno died with things as they were, he would probably have been beatified anyway. Who knows?

But His Lady in Heaven had still greater gifts for Nuno, still greater rewards. A slightly drastic measure was necessary, but it would lead to the greatest happiness of Nuno's life—complete union with God even on earth. And it would lead, before long, to a grand reunion in Heaven.

Lady Beatrice was not long to enjoy the splendor of rank and of riches.

While still in full bloom of youth and enjoying infant caresses of two darling children, death came —as a thief in the night. She died giving birth to her third child, a boy.

News of the passing of Lady Beatrice, Countess of Barcellos and Duchess of Braganza, spread like a lightning bolt throughout the kingdom, and lodged in the heart of Nuno. Grief-stricken, he hastened to Chaves where his daughter had breathed her last. He transported the corpse to Villa-do-Conde, where he buried it under the choir of the convent of Saint Clara.

"Mute, pale, rigid as a statue," says Oliveira, "he followed the bier. When the coffin was lowered into the tomb, that great and strong man lost his

composure and threw himself upon the stone, feeling within him the snapping of the last thread that bound him to earth."

On his way back to Alemtejo, Nuno kept pondering that statement of another King: "Vanity of vanity and all is vanity." What was there in life of any value but to perfect oneself, to be ready for death? Was he not now forty? Had not Lady Leonora, his wife, and now his own daughter—so much younger than he—already passed through the portal to which neither title nor riches, but rather detachment from them, was the key? "How little I have loved and served God!" he exclaimed. "But, O my God, I wish to give myself to Thee entirely. I wish nothing of Nuno to be left! I wish to lose myself to myself, that I may be lost in Thee!"

The plan he had in mind may not have reached maturity. We do not know.

Before he reached Alemtejo, he received word from the King that there was war in Africa. That Ceuta, on the African coast opposite to Gibraltar, where the King's son, Don Henry, had established a Portuguese colony, was under attack by the Moslems.

In response to his King's call, Nuno forgot his own grief and laid aside his own plans. He set sail at once for Ceuta (pronounced thay-ootah).

The campaign was stubborn and bloody. Nuno,

at the head of the army, soon captured the city despite stubborn resistance. But the Turks, in retaliation, sent no less than three armies, one after the other, to drive him out. Nuno repulsed them all. Then, when he was sure of the defense of the new and important fortress, he placed it under the direction of Peter di Menezes, and returned to Portugal.

He now had a final battle to win—with himself.

After disembarking at Lagos, he immediately retired to his estates in Evora.

To the amazement of all Portugal, their grand Knight, their victorious general, their idol, their wealthiest and most powerful noble, took off his rich garments, donned poor ones, and began systematically to despoil himself of all his titles and estates.

11

THE CARMELITE

As THE clipper-planes from America sweep into the harbor at Lisbon, and as passengers crowd the rails of vessels edging into a mooring, the visitors to Portugal's capital can hardly fail to notice the towering hill that dominates the city from the south. This hill rises almost perpendicularly from the valley overlooking the broad and stately *Avenida.*

It was the top of that hill which Nuno chose to be the site of a great monument to Our Lady of the Scapular—a monument of gratitude for victory, and a reminder forever to the people of Portugal that She was their Mother, that they were Her children.

It is said that Nuno promised this shrine to Mary on the fields of Valverde.

In *1389,* Nuno bought that property on top of the hill—then an olive plantation, which belonged to the Brothers of the Trinity—and went person-

ally to lay the first stone of the marvelous edifice he had planned. It was to be a shrine to Mary that would find an equal nowhere in the world.

The difficulty of building such a monument there was almost insurmountable. After three years of work, the great corps of craftsmen, whom Nuno had employed, seemed hardly to have begun. Three times the foundations had given way and carried down the walls that had already been built. After the third time, the men were discouraged. It seemed folly to continue.

"It doesn't matter," said Nuno. "If we can't build it of stone, we shall build it of bronze."

But the laborers refused to work. After seeing the walls thrice crumple, they were afraid.

Nuno trebled their pay.

For the fourth time, the men went back to work raising the walls up from the side of the cliff towards the azure sky. Often they worked in sunshine, often they could not work because of the violent winds that swept the mountain top. But little by little they progressed with the tiers of supporting ramparts. Eight years after this fourth attempt, the entire foundational structure stood solidly, as though it had been thrust there by the same primeval disturbance that threw up the mountain. Then, upon this foundation, bit by bit, rose the apse. Men, in larger numbers, worked upon it

in shifts, day in and day out, over thirty years.

Nuno, whenever time permitted during all those years, was to be found up on the mountain, watching the work, encouraging the men, consulting with the engineers.

When it was finally finished, it was not only the most magnificent temple in Portugal, but perhaps the finest of its kind in all the world.

It was two hundred and fifty feet long, and about a hundred and ten feet wide. Saint Peters, in Rome, built later to be the largest Christian church in the world, is only a hundred feet longer.

But the size of this monument, erected by Nuno to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was not its only source of greatness. First there was the location, with the immensity and daring of the supporting ramparts, then there was the breath-taking splendor of its Gothic perfection, and the richness of furnishings and décor. Its vastness was divided into three naves, equally illuminated from above and sustained by the shafts of five pilasters on each side. The half-pillars rose up gracefully to converge far above in undefined obscurity. Out of their shadows shone little shields, of stone, bearing the holy images that had illumined the banner of Nuno's victorious troops.

In the great window, at the rear of the choir, glittered Nuno's flaming escutcheon, and in front

of the window, in the very center of the apse, in breathing majesty rose the throne of the Virgin of Mount Carmel, with the Infant in Her arms. In His right hand the Infant, it seems, held a candle that was ever lighted. From Mary's arm hung the Carmelite Scapular, the pledge of salvation that She, in person, had given to Saint Simon Stock, in England, during the previous century, saying: *"Whosoever dies clothed in this shall never suffer eternal fire!"*.

From the outside, the major chapel appeared to be a superb, impregnable fortress. Inside, it was a bit of paradise brought down to earth. Its many and marvelous paintings, lost in a maze of climbing Gothic lines, vied with the gold that glistened everywhere. It was a hymn in art and stone.

Nuno built this shrine to His Lady out of the great riches that had been given him, and he endowed it with revenues for the centuries to come. Portugal was not to forget the Blessed Virgin and the Brown Scapular.

ii

From the beginning it was Nuno's intention to entrust the wonderful edifice to the Order of Carmelites. When it was finally ready, he wrote to Father Alphonse, of Alfama, Vicar General in the Convent of Saint Mary in Moura. The letter begins:

"Before all else, I kiss the holy Scapular, the precious gift which the Mother of God brought down from Heaven in defense of Her friars."

Then he requests Father Alphonse to send him a certain number of Carmelite religious . . . "but that they be good Portuguese and devoted to their country" . . . in order that they might have the care of the new church.

Father Alphonse sent the religious gladly. With them he sent the Rev. Doctor Gomes, a Carmelite preacher known and revered throughout western Europe, to be Prior. Nuno said that he would take care of all expenses, provide for their maintenance *in perpetuum*—in so far as possible—and in his profound religious humility he added: "In doing all these things I but render to God that which God has already rendered to me" ("Isto é tornar a Deus o que me antes prestou.")

In 1397, most probably in the month of May, the Carmelite friars took possession of the yet uncompleted church and convent.

iii

One may wonder why Nuno should have chosen the Carmelites rather than the Dominicans or the Cistercians. Perhaps one reason was that the King had already erected monuments to Our Lady—one to Our Lady of the Rosary, and the other to Our

Lady of Victory—and entrusted it to those other Mary-minded Orders. Some biographers say that this choice was governed by his attraction to the austerity of the Carmelite rule, but this is hardly tenable since there was little difference between the Carmelite rule—as mitigated under Saint Simon Stock—and the rule of the Dominicans.

Whatever the reason, there were three great devotions in the life of Nuno towards Mary: The Scapular, the Rosary, and the *Memorare.* All three tied together, supporting his Marian life like the ramparts of the basilica. The Scapular was a devotion of affiliation, the *Memorare* was a reminder of that affiliation, and the Rosary was its perfecting element. In giving the Scapular, Nuno heard Our Lady saying: "Come to me—wear my sign—and I will make you a Saint." In the Rosary, with Her mysteries filling out the symphony of the sequence of *Ave Marias,* he heard Her say: "If you will be perfect, if you will find My Son even on earth, imitate me!"

And Portugal was not to forget. If it should forget Mary, it would forget its true Queen, and be lost.

The same was true of the entire world, but Nuno did not feel sent to the entire world. He felt that he had been sent to Portugal.

Moreover, now that his work was done, he wanted

to go and follow Mary more completely. As a reward for his service as a Knight, His Lady was calling him to new greatness. One by one She snapped the chains that bound him to earth, through the trial that led Nuno to self-exile, through the deaths of his wife and daughter, through an inspiration to sell all and give to the poor and to go and seek God in solitude.

Such was Mary's way. Nuno did not know that. When he chose Mary to be his Lady, and chose the Scapular to be his token from Her that he was to wear and make glorious by bravery and self-sacrifice out of his love for Her, he little guessed that this simple turn of all his intentions—directing them to God, through Mary—would lead to his greatness, to his country's independence, and to sainthood for himself! He never dreamed, as he played at war with his brothers, made different from them only in that His Lady was the Queen of Heaven instead of a lady in the court of Lisbon, that he would be hailed centuries later as the saviour of his country, and raised to the altars of the Catholic Church!

Centuries later a man named Grignon de Montfort was to give the explanation: "As God chose to come to the world through Mary, so He wills that the world should go back, through Mary."

iv

Hardly nad the Carmelites taken possession of the basilica, overlooking Lisbon, than Nuno divided all the goods which yet remained into three parts. One of these was set aside for the poor, the second was for his grandchildren, and the third—a far smaller part than the other two—was for his own necessary sustenance. His jewels and his arms he had already distributed among his knights and equerries. His lands, with royal permission, he had willed to those who had cultivated them for him.

Towards the end of July, in 1422, when the existence of the community in the new convent had been assured, and the erection of a new Carmelite province in Lisbon had been obtained from the Pope, Nuno presented himself at the convent.

As usual, there was a great deal of excitement over his coming, and the porter hurried away to get the Prior.

"Father," Nuno said, when Father Gomes had come, "I would very much like your permission to live here, in a little cell near the porter's lodge, and to be present at the Community exercises. I know I'm not worthy to join the Order. And if I did join, the enemies of Portugal would know that I could no longer lead my troops, and the fear of my name being removed they might attack before we reach national maturity. But I want to be as

close to Our Lady as possible, and would prefer that room to my castle. I have some goods to be distributed to the poor, and I would very much like to do it from here. It has all come from Our Lady, and it is to Our Lady that they may come to receive it."

Father Gomes listened with wide eyes.

When Nuno passed through the streets, crowds gathered. Right now there were well over a hundred admirers who had followed the great Knight's cavalcade up the mountain to get a glimpse of him as he came out of the convent. If such a great man were to remain with the Community, the crowds would be constant, the solitude of the friars would be destroyed, there would be a constant source of distraction.

Nuno read his thoughts.

"After I am here a while, Father, the people will become accustomed to me. When I live in a castle, and travel with the troops, I am a national figure. But after I have lived here a while, without property or national distinction, I will soon lose my mystery to them and will cause far less comment in the streets of Lisbon than the current favorite at the arena."

Whatever the Prior's misgivings, he agreed to let Nuno come. Nuno changed his serious expression to a smile with: "I'm usually up here to

see how the workmen are coming. Now I won't have to come up anymore!"

Nuno went out and dismissed his men, smilingly told the crowd that the Grand Constable of Portugal was leaving for Paradise—a rather good exchange—and personally carried the few belongings that he had brought with him to the small room near the porter's lodge.

During the year that followed, he divided his time between prayer in his cell or at the feet of the Madonna of the Scapular in chapel, and supervision of the construction. To aid in the latter, he had a temporary tower built on the esplanade of the mountain to the south of the apse. The tower was an observatory from which he could see all the building operations, and could go down to any spot where special supervision or a helping hand might be needed. He often carried building materials himself, or aided in the placing of a stone.

From this same tower, Nuno could see the entire city lying beneath him in far-flung panorama. The white houses glittered under the intensely blue Portuguese sky, tufted with its usual feathery clouds. Farther off shone the blue of the sea, and in the distance rolled the blending hues of the mountains of Arropaço. Nuno recalled all the memories of his sieges, his assaults, the revolution. Against the turmoil that reappeared so vividly before

him, he the more rejoiced in the sweetness of his peaceful refuge and smiled happily on a busy Lisbon harbor, heart of a new and free nation, dedicated to Mary — with a new code of morals in the Court and in the country, with new shrines to God, with new respect and devotion for Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist.

Nuno was happy.

Only one thing troubled him.

He was a lost soul. He was neither in the world, nor was he in religion. He longed, with all his being, to fly off to some distant land, where no one knew him, and to spend the rest of his days alone with God. Yet he knew that his enemies feared him more than they feared the armies of Portugal. His enemies thought that he was aided by God, and was invincible. When he was with the troops, often battles were never fought because the enemy troops knew that he was there.

If he left Portugal, while the country was not well integrated and self-sufficient, either the Moors or the Castilians—or both—would fall upon the country at once. He was sure of it. And if he entered the monastery, the same would be true. He had to be ready, despite his age, to go with his troops if any enemy action threatened.

After passing a year in this manner, he thought of a solution.

v

In 1423, a Provincial chapter was held at the Carmel in Lisbon. Father Alphonse, the Vicar General, came from Moura to preside.

To the astonishment of the chapter, Nuno presented himself and asked permission to become a Lay Brother—nay, even less than a Lay Brother.

To understand the magnitude of this move, the reader should understand that a Lay Brother is usually a servant in a religious community. In the Carmelite Order, a Lay Brother is the one who waits on table, cleans the house, tends the farm, cooks, washes, scrubs, binds broken books, fixes furniture and plumbing, hauls water and wood, tends the fire, takes his orders from almost any priest in the house. Moreover, he takes his orders from the Prior, to do these things, under pain of sin. It is not so much a drudgery as it is a complete submission of the will.

Nuno knew this. He understood perfectly what the renunciation of his will would mean. He was *binding himself* to take orders to menial tasks—he who had given orders to an entire nation.

Furthermore, as was mentioned, Nuno did not even ask to be a full lay brother, but a *donato,* as the Carmelites then called a brother who was not a full-fledged member of the Community. A full-fledged lay brother took solemn vows, and was real-

ly a member of the Community, entitled to the respect of all as a real member of the First Order of Carmelites. A *donato* took only simple vows; he could leave whenever he wished, but as long as he was in the community, he was the least of the community, and the servant of all.

Nuno had to ask to be a *donato* because, should enemies threaten the country, he would have to be ready to go with the troops.

And despite the lowliness of such a state, that was what Nuno wanted: to be the servant of the servants of Mary.

Father Alfonse, and the definitors, felt that the change would be too great for Nuno. They tried diplomatically to refuse. When Nuno wanted a definite answer, they decided to test his vocation.

Word was sent to the King, and his Majesty immediately sent his own son — the Infante Don Duarte, heir to the throne — who, because of his many virtues, had been a special favorite of Nuno's. This attractive young knight, whom Nuno had greatly influenced at the royal court and on the boy's many visits to Nuno's own estates, had gained the name "The Chaste."

Don Duarte begged Nuno not to humiliate himself. In the name of the King, and in the name of Portugal, he asked the Grand Knight to preserve his dignity, to remain a center around which the

heart of the new Portugal might turn in a feeling of greatness, warmth, freedom.

"Is there any freedom," Nuno returned, "greater than the freedom to serve God? And is there any freedom more complete than union with Him? Does He not free us from ties of money and property and selfishness, of avarice and pride and inconstancy? Is He not, indeed, the only true Emancipator? Who is free who does not love God?"

And so, on August 15—the Feast of the Assumption—the anniversary of his knighthood and of his victories at Aljubarrota and at Ceuta—Don Nun' Alvarez Pereira pronounced the three holy vows of religion. He, the Count of Ourem, of Arrayolos and of Barcellos, the Master of three provinces of the kingdom he had helped to establish, the Lord and Baron of almost countless towns and castles under his command, the Greater Majordomo of King John I and Grand Constable of Portugal, despoiled himself at the feet of Mary of all his grandeur and was invested in the poor habit of a Carmelite friar.

When the Scapular was placed over his shoulders, he clasped it to his lips, and great tears of joy rolled down his weathered cheeks.

The Invincible, tne Unconquerable, had been overcome by his own Lady.

When he arose, stifling tears of tenderness, a pow-

erful lord—noblest among the noble—had disappeared from this world. There stood in his stead *Brother Nuno of Saint Mary,* Carmelite.

He was a little over sixty-three years of age.

vi

Lisbon was unspeakable with amazement. The Infante Don Duarte even hurried to the monastery to assure himself that it was not merely rumor. When he saw Nuno in the rough, coarse cloth of the habit he was torn between admiration, and dismay for what he feared would happen to Portugal without Nuno as the Grand Constable.

"At least, sire," the Prince pleaded, "keep your title of Grand Constable. You know how our enemies fear your name. If you forsake the country, they will most assuredly fall upon us."

Not without tenderness, Nuno rebuked the young Prince for tempting him, and explained that he would wear his armor beneath his habit, not to be without its discomfiture, and as a warning to the enemies of Portugal that he would take his place at the head of the troops should they take up arms against her. "I am not even a lay brother, Don Duarte," said the aging, habit-clad general. "I'm only a *donato,* ready to come to the aid of my country if she should need me."

The Prince departed sorrowing, feeling that he

and Portugal had lost a national figure, yet with a deep spiritual feeling that he could not quite define.

Such was to be the reaction of the entire country.

Brother Nuno, for his part, celebrated his profession by asking to be changed to a cell still poorer than his former one. A crucifix, hair-cloths, and the usual Carmelite "discipline" hung on the wall. The bed was of boards, covered with rough wool. In this extreme of poverty Blessed Nuno, who had all his life enjoyed the richest of the land, found new richness. He had never been so close to his Lady.

Just before taking the habit, Nuno gave the shield that he had carried in his battles to Father Gomes, the Prior. The prophetic sword, tempered for him by the armorer of Santarem, was placed by the Prior in the treasury of the Convent, along with the scepter of the King of Castile and the precious reliquary which were taken at Aljubarrota. Nuno had always carried the reliquary on his breast. He attributed to it his miraculous escape at Valverde.

It could not have been easy for the sixty-three year old veteran to part with these last treasures.

Soon he was taking part in the most menial tasks without causing the slightest comment in the Community. He seemed to fit. The idea of a grand knight, with vast dominions, was too distant from

this white-haired brother emptying chambers and serving at the table.

There were very likely some in the Community who thought Nuno was "grand-standing," and who made him feel the weight of their judgment.

In the eyes of some in the world, Nuno might have been considered finally a failure—like the Man Who was voluntarily nailed to a Cross.

During the years that followed, if any of his fellow-religious ever tried to spare him the more laborious or the more humble duties, he quietly protested that in the house of God all duties are great, and that he had not come there to escape fatigue. And although he was usually meek under remarks that he was "a fake," even though he had sometimes to keep his eyes lowered lest they show the blaze that sometimes flashed there despite himself, he would never tolerate the slightest sign of respect towards him, particularly with regard to the use of any of his previous titles.

During these years, one of the priests who lived in the community was Father John Gonçales, who in his youth had served as an ordinary soldier in Nuno's great army. Every time that Brother Nuno met this particular priest, he not only kissed his Scapular—which was a usual token of respect to a Carmelite priest—but whenever Father John reached out his hand to restrain Nuno, the humble

lay brother also kissed his hand. And he did this with such deference that not even his enemies could misconstrue it. Father John, in turn, himself most saintly, always signed himself as the "Servant of the Constable," feeling more humiliated than complimented by Nuno's respect of his priesthood.

Almost day by day, one could see the growth in Blessed Nuno's piety. He had been able to kneel, in the middle of a raging battle, and pray. Now, in solitude, with all his mind and heart bent to prayer, he spent many hours lost in adoration before the Sacrament he so loved. Each day—though not obliged—he said the Divine Office. Some say that he did this even before his profession. Each day he attended as many Masses as possible.

Out of this nearness to God came an increasing desire to be detached ever more from himself. Nuno longed to be always alone with God. He wanted to eat nothing. He wanted to take the discipline frequently. He was in love with God.

Notwithstanding his advanced age, because of his wonderful physical condition the Prior saw fit to permit Nuno to fast to some extent, and to take the discipline more often than the rule required. We are told that he often disciplined himself so strenuously that he caused the blood to run from that body that had never offended God.

The change was not over night. Perhaps if Nuno

had begun religious life with strenuous mortifications he would not have gone far. But now he mortified himself not because he felt that it was the thing to do, but because he wanted to do it. Now that he had a taste of union with God, he had a distaste for all things of earth. He was finally, and completely, in love.

vii

The reader will be disappointed if he or she expects to see Nuno's life end in this glorious God-seeking, without the interruptions of earth. The world was not to leave him alone. Nor can we think, knowing Nuno as we do, that he would altogether have wanted it to leave him alone, since God had placed him in the world, to find God in the world. The most distant recluse is still in the world, still must have some dealings either with men, or with the elements, or with the simple ardure of keeping alive. He is a man before he is united to God.

Nuno did not cut off relations with his family. And, as we have said, he was always ready to go out to battle should the necessity arise.

Yet, his thirst for solitude was so great that at one time, taking advantage of his partial freedom as a *donato* and despite his love of country, he planned to go out to a desert and become a recluse.

It was only a royal order, from King John, that stopped him. Instead, to somewhat accede to his holy desires, the Prior gave him the most remote cell in the convent, where no one could go to him when he was not on duty in the convent.

There, before an alabaster image of Mary's Assumption into Heaven, he spent many hours in ecstasy. It is said that Mary appeared to him there, more than once, and foretold the day of his death, also telling him that She would assist him by Her presence in his last moments.

Nuno wrote to his mother, who was now leading the life of a penitent, and from time to time sweet reminders found their way to him in his solitude from his grandchild, Lady Isabelle. "These letters," says one biographer, "came to him from the world like the trills of little birds on a spring morning." Nuno always answered them, most tenderly. He addressed his grandchild *Minha linda,* "My dear little one." Of her and of the two boys he once wrote: "You are a part of my soul, because you contain the image of your dear mother" (his own daughter, Beatrice, who had died so prematurely). Nuno—like that Marian-Carmelite of the Twentieth Century, Therese of Lisieux—loved his family all the more as he grew in love of God.

Yet to Lady Isabelle's brother, Ferdinand, who was afterwards the second Duke of Braganza, he

also sent strong words of reproof. He called him, in one letter, *Travesso* (somewhat impudent), and explained the necessity of humility.

There also remains to us a letter which Brother Nuno sent to his son-in-law, the Infante Don Alphonse. The latter, who had inherited from Nun' Alvarez the title of Count of Barcellos, now thought to get some of the properties which Nuno had willed to the convent of Lisbon. The Infante reasoned that those properties were an inseparable part of his Barcellona properties, and that Nuno had been carried away in his enthusiasm in willing them to the Carmelite convent. Besides, he wanted the money.

"Think well regarding this matter, my Lord," Nuno wrote, after explaining his own reasons at length. "What you want to do is a grave sin against God; and whoever does not do his duty on earth will not enter into Heaven."

His letter was so efficacious that Don Alphonse abandoned his claims.

And just as his sense of justice made him firm, despite his deep humility, Nuno's patriotism was always a part of him. He felt that he owed it to his country to keep contact with the enemies of Portugal, to keep them informed that he was always ready to go with the troops.

Not long after news of his profession had reached

Castile, several prominent Castilian nobles came to Lisbon to ascertain with their own eyes what they could hardly hope was true. Nuno was not fooled by their admiration nor by the points of their questions. Among those who came was the ambassador of Castile. He came towards the end of the first year of Nuno's profession. His ostensible mission in the country was to ratify the peace treaty between the two countries. But he wanted first to visit Nuno.

When the ambassador arrived at the convent and met the aged friar, he could hardly believe that this wretchedly garbed man could possibly have been the cause of Spain's great defeat, or any menace to her dominance of little Portugal.

After a moment of recollection, Nuno led the ambassador to his poor cell.

"Will you never leave this habit, then?" the ambassador asked, a little too eagerly.

"Yes," answered Nuno. "I will leave it if the King of Castile should again wage war on Portugal."

Nuno stood up. It were as though a vision of battle passed before his flashing eyes.

"And in that case," he continued, "I would serve equally the religion that I profess and the land that gave me birth."

The ambassador looked at him in astonishment. The humble lay brother seemed transformed. In-

stead of a poorly clad, weak old man, the Castilian nobleman saw the Grand Knight of Portugal, the Invincible Captain. Even as he stared, Nuno thrust aside his Scapular, opened his tunic. Beneath it he was wearing a complete suit of armor.

The Castilian bowed and withdrew. According to some writers, he was so greatly impressed by the noble and fearless reply of the lay brother that he strove to effect ratification of the treaty on a permanent basis.

viii

About a year later, news came that the Bey of Tunis and the Moorish king of Granada had allied themselves with Morocco, and that the allies intended to attack Ceuta and renew hostilities with Portugal. All Lisbon was a tumult of preparation. A great naval expedition was planned to be captained by the King himself with all his princes.

Brother Nuno, when approached by the King, spent much time in recollection before giving an answer. The war trumpets were sounding, his men called for him. But had he not hung up his sword at the altar of Mary? Yet, too, he had purposely left it unsheathed so that the enemies of Portugal would know that he would take it up again if they threatened the country. Was this merely a vain threat? Would he remain in his convent and pray,

or would he take off his beloved habit and go out to fight?

Portugal, and the enemies of Portugal, did not have long to wait for an answer.

After long prayer and consultation with Father Gomes, he made his decision according to what he felt certainly was the will of God rather than of himself.

The Infante Don Duarte was accustomed to visit Nun'Alvarez frequently and to keep him informed of the preparations for the expedition. On one of these visits Nuno had remarked:

"Without laying aside my Carmelite habit, but with my Rosary in one hand and my sword in the other, I will come to defend the cause of God as did Elias. Surely there could be no death more glorious, nor a burial more coveted by me, than in this war for the defence of the Faith against the Crescent and for the honor of Portugal."

At another time, during these same preparations, to "sound him out" some companions reminded Nuno of his advanced age and his weakened strength. They were standing on a plateau above the river.

Nuno silently reached out, took a lance from one of the knights, and lifting it over his head, said: "I could hurl this shaft into Africa if I had to do so." Then he tossed it. Whistling through the air,

the heavy iron weapon sped away to the far side of the river!

News of this incident spread. It spread even outside Portugal, to the enemy. The words of Nuno became a legend, and are today a part of the Portuguese idiom. "To send a lance into Africa" is an expression used in Portugal today to denote a difficult task.

Finally, when the day of departure had actually come, the old friar-warrior descended from his convent in company with the Infante. He was dressed in a worn tunic, half hidden by his great brown Scapular. He held his Rosary in his hand. His embarkation with the troops was a great consolation to the King and the cause of lively enthusiasm among the men.

Just as the ships were about to weigh anchor, news arrived that the Moors, frightened by the fleet which was to move against them, had abandoned the undertaking. With all good reason we may hold that they were influenced also by the knowledge that with the fleet came Don Nun'Alvarez Pereira, whose name alone struck terror into the hearts of all Portugal's enemies.

By that time, Nuno's name—as we have often mentioned—had become a byword, because the entire Iberian peninsula was alive with the memory of Nuno's unbelievable courage and almost mirac-

ulous victories. After the battles of Aljubarrota and Valverde, it had even become a standby to quiet unruly children. Writers have recorded that Castilian mothers, vexed by the caprices, continual crying, or stubbornness of their little ones, to put an end to the fretfulness had only to say: "Now I call Don Nuno!" And the whimpering instantly ceased. With wide open eyes, the fearful little ones looked about to see if Nuno would indeed appear.

Thus, even when many Castilians resented him, they rendered homage to his military greatness. More than one of their writers has even celebrated the respect in which he was held.

ix

With the Moorish threat gone, the heroic friar returner to the peace of his convent.

Now, more than ever, his charity towards the poor became an urgent craving. He had seen the beggars in the streets. He had seen some of them look up to him, from a swath of rags, hopefully. He had always had compassion on the poor. But now, as he had advanced in love of God, so had he advanced in compassion and love of his fellow men. He wanted to help.

Readily the Prior gave permission for Nuno to assume the duties of porter. Like his follower of some centuries later—Saint Conrad von Altoetten—

Nuno found new happiness in receiving the poor at the convent door, dispensing meals, distributing Scapulars and Rosaries. And whenever he went down into the town, on convent business, with his tunic rent and worn and patched, he felt himself one of them. There in the street or in the porter's lodge, he was only too glad to take his place among them. They were now at last the brothers of his choice.

Even as porter, Nuno could not give them all the time he wished. Prayer, convent duties, visits from royal persons who were not to be insulted simply because he had himself repudiated titular nobility, all took much of his time. But all the rest was given to the poor.

And the poor, in turn, crowded about the lodge, clamoring for Brother Nuno. The hungry asked for food. The sick begged to have his blessing. Those poverty stricken, those trembling with fever, those who repelled others by their revolting wounds and leprosy, were all welcomed by him with such warmth that though they sometimes could receive no more than his smile—were all refreshed.

Soon, he had a new fame.

When he went down into Lisbon on errands, or with permission to visit some particular shrine or sick person, swarms of the poor soon gathered. Traffic stopped as they clamored about him down

the streets. He would be dressed in his tattered habit, a mean cap on his head, carrying a Rosary in one hand, bent by age, leaning on a cane. "A sign of the cross! Brother Nuno!" some cried. Just a sign of the cross, they said, or the touching of his hand or even of his clothing, was enough to cure them.

For all, Brother Nuno had a kind word, an affectionate caress. He felt himself happy among them, happier than he had ever felt in palaces, in royal estates, or even when surrounded by exultant troops in the flush of a victory.

During these few years that followed—all too rapidly, one upon the other—Nuno's wonderful soul gave forth its most brilliant flashes of virtue. It stood revealed in all the glory of his profound humility and inexhaustible charity.

How—for his choice of Her—his Lady in Heaven had enriched him!

Before long, all Portugal was singing Nuno's praise. He had first set them an example of courage to win freedom, and he now set them an example for the proper use of freedom.

And his example was followed. Perhaps in no other court of Europe were morals so exemplary, nor in any other country was there a greater sense of national unity and brotherly love. A nation was being born not so much in labor of war, but in labor

of new ideals, of militant Catholicism.

Could it be that we may see a renewal of this today?

12

BEHOLD THY MOTHER!

NUNO WAS ill.

He had been in Carmel eight wonderful, happy years. He had found the pearl without price, the boundless treasure that could never be taken from him. He lived now—not Nun'Alvarez Pereira—but with Mary, in God.

Brother Nuno of Mary knew that he would not be restrained to this earth much longer. He knew that his Lady was waiting for him, for the final nuptials in the Heart of Christ. "I will rejoice," he could say with the Psalmist, "in the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord."

Don Duarte was there every day to see him, bringing the physician from the royal palace. Long before, this celebrated physician, whom Don Duarte had brought on visits to Nuno under the subterfuge of merely having him along as a friend, counseled

Don Duarte that the aged brother should get more sleep, should not spend himself so much. But Brother Nuno would not listen. Why should he prolong life by wasting it?

But now, in his almost miserably poor cell, Portugal's great hero lay upon the pallet unable to rise. Don Duarte passed many weary hours there at his side, praying, hoping he might be of some service.

Neither he—nor indeed Nuno, himself—knew how great had been the bond of love between them. Nor was it just between them. It was between Nuno and all Portugal, from the poorest peasant to the King. When it was certain that the illness would not pass, unless a miracle might happen, thousands of people crowded to the monastery; devotions were attended all over the country, praying God that the "Grand Constable" might be spared yet a little while; almost daily the King himself, despite all the urgencies of state, was there in the cell with Don Duarte, watching, hoping.

On the thirtieth day of October, 1431, King John was not at Nuno's side. He had to attend what was perhaps the most solemn and important congress in the history of Portugal: the congress at which the final peace pact was signed between Castile and Portugal—the pact in which Castile renounced all rights to Portugal and fully recognized her sovereignty. Portugal, from that day, ceased to fear

invasion from Castile. From that day, Castile became her friend.

On the next day, the Feast of All Saints (November 1), Brother Nuno became suddenly worse. It was as though his mission had been completed. The people of Portugal had been praying for his recovery, and rather than answer their prayer in a manner that would deprive Brother Nuno any longer of the Beatific Vision, God answered it by bringing about the final pact with Castile.

That very evening, the day that the pact was signed, Nuno could more than ever join in the chant of the *"Nunc dimittis,"* which came to him faintly from the great chapel he had erected to his Lady: "Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace."

ii

Thus came the dawn of November 1, 1431, the day that Nuno was to leave his beloved Portugal for the nation of saints.

During the day all Lisbon heard the pealing of bells—celebrating the peace that had been signed and sealed by the Kings of Portugal and Castile, and celebrating the solemnity of All Saints, of the entire Church Triumphant.

They rang out, too, the joy that was in Brother Nuno's heart.

He had already received the last Sacraments. First he had renewed his religious vows, to Father Alfonse who had come from Moura to be present. He had thanked the superior and all his brother-religious for having taken him into the Order. Many of the assembled friars had to stifle sobs as Nuno asked them to forgive him if he had at any time offended anyone. Some broke into open sobs when the saintly brother devoutly followed the holy rite of Extreme Unction, and seemed actually to embrace Our Lord in that last Communion.

The physician saw that the last moments were at hand. King John, who had asked that he be notified, came posthaste from the palace. When he entered the little cell and saw the mask of death on Nuno's face, the monarch rushed across the room, bent down over the pallet, and embraced the emaciated body. Nuno made a feeble effort, as though he wished to return the embrace.

When the King straightened himself and turned, the onlookers say that such extreme agony was written on his tearful face, and betrayed by his heaving breast, that it seemed rather that he was in the agony of death than the dying saint.

King John must have been filled with the memory of his many wonderful hours with Nuno — tender hours in the family, glorious hours on the field of battle and in triumphant marches. He must have

remembered that day when Nuno, hardly more than a boy, had upset the banquet table when Beatrice was betrothed to the King of Castile—and he, himself, was sitting hopelessly at the same table. He must have remembered the revolution, and how Nuno stood up to the congress in his determination to conduct the war as he saw fit—and how the men followed him, against such unbelievable odds, and how Nuno led them—to free the country they both loved so well. And how little Nuno had thought of himself! All that had been given to him—all those lands—distributed to the tenants! All that money to the poor, all the shrines built, all the victorious crusades against sin! Not only had Nuno risked his own life, and disdained all earthly fortune, but he had preferred duty even to his family—seeing three of his brothers go down to death.

Meanwhile, Nuno was forgetting all that is human and earthly. His wide and luminous eyes, staring from a death-like mask, seemed to be looking into Heaven.

He was dressed in the habit in which he was to be buried. He had asked that favor. He did not want death camouflaged. He wanted to embrace it. Rather than a death-shroud, it was a birth-garment.

In his tapering, emaciated hands, he held a crucifix pressed against his breast. Many times he pain-

fully raised it to his lips in a feeble effort to kiss Our Lord's wounds.

The slow, melancholy tolling of the convent bell made known to Lisbon that Brother Nuno was dying. It was heard through the pealings of all the other bells throughout the city, and the people understood. Everywhere, men and women and children were upon their knees, in home or in the churches, praying. Some had never prayed quite that way in all their lives. Brother Nuno seemed like a part of them.

Under the great Gothic arches of the Carmel basilica, erected by Nuno to the Virgin who promised a happy death to Scapular wearers, ladies and knights and common people gathered to pray.

Back in the humble cell, breathing became even more difficult and troubled for him. In a weak, but surprisingly steady voice, he made his last request. He wanted someone to read the Passion of Our Lord from the gospel of Saint John.

The Prior immediately gave a sign for one of the religious to approach the pallet and read. In the silence, accentuated by stifled sobs, the pages of the manuscript bible crackled loudly as the reader sought the passage.

Nuno listened with deep recollection. He did not seem to be there. As the drama of Christ's passion slowly and familiarly unfolded in the simple words of the beloved apostle, Nuno's face seemed to

register all its feeling, as though he were seeing Our Lord approach death, carrying the cross, nailed to it, raised, dying.

Suddenly the reading friar came to the words: *Ecce Mater tua!* "Behold thy Mother!"

He read no further.

At those words, Brother Nuno suddenly relaxed. The physician, anxious, bent over him.

He was dead.

She had come for him! His Lady! God had come to the world through Her, and Nuno, through Her, had gone to God! *"Behold thy Mother!"*

High in the great belfry, the bells of Our Lady of Victory tolled the tidings to a tearful Lisbon. From one minute to another the people had been waiting for that sound. Now that it came, they could hardly believe it. The mournful tones passed through the evening air, and all other bells fell silent. It rolled under the beautiful azure heaven of Nuno's Portugal, passing above the orange trees and palms and falling like hammer-blows on the hearts of thousands. It bespoke a general misfortune, a national sorrow.

The poor wept for their benefactor and consoler. The great mourned their companion-in-arms, the hero of their now independent fatherland. The King grieved for his friend and brother. Lamentation rose on every side. From everywhere, crowds

began to throng up the mountain for a last look at the remains of their beloved.

iii

Arranged in his coffin, the one-time commander lay clad in the long, rough habit—almost covered by his Scapular. The crucifix was fixed in his hands. He seemed to be asleep rather than dead. His face was tranquil, almost translucent. And never did Nuno so touch the hearts of his fellow men—not in kindliness, nor bravery nor triumph did people gaze at him and feel their hearts so deeply moved. Many of the younger ones from outside Lisbon, who had never seen him, were pierced through with an admiration and love and kinship that they could not explain. Finally, when he passed among them in solemn parade for the last time, the throne of his coffin was borne on the shoulders of the highest dignitaries of the kingdom, followed by the King and the royal princes and a cortege longer than one could see.

There was one who could not be there.

It was Nuno's ninety-year-old mother, the Lady Irene, bound to her palace by infirmity.

When she heard the news of Brother Nuno's death, she *must have* known, better than anyone else, that her beloved "Sir Galahad" had mounted to his Lady, to the glory of eternity. On earth he

had neglected the glory that was his, preferring to lead the humble life of Nazareth, of Carmel. Now, indeed, he must be in Heaven. And intent as she was in the austerities of her penitential life, she must have thanked God most sincerely, even while sorrow welled from her maternal heart. For in Nuno's holy life she could recognize the fruition of those sentiments which she had instilled in his childish soul. She could recognize, too, in his crown of a well-spent life, the pardon of God for her own youthful offenses. The blessing of Heaven must have filled her soul completely; it must have banished forever from her heart those last fears of remaining guilt. Now she, too, could say: "Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace."

Everyone can be a saint, Nuno would have said. He need merely choose Mary as his Lady.

13

NUNO'S TEMPLE FALLS

BROTHER NUNO of Saint Mary was laid to rest under the floor of the chapel, at the feet of the great statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Ten years later, a wish that Brother Nuno had expressed during life—that he might be buried near his earthly mother as well as at the feet of his Heavenly mother—was granted. Lady Irene died at Portalegre and, it seems, with a great reputation for sanctity. People invoked her heavenly intercession as her body was borne to Lisbon to be interred next to that of her son. The epitaph on her tomb, which may be read in the *Agilogio Lusitano,* read simply: "Here lies the much honored, virtuous matron, Lady Irene Conçalves, mother of the holy Count who founded this monastery."

The epitaph on the tomb next to that of Lady Irene read:

"Here lies Nuno of Saint Mary, the great General,

the founder of the House of Braganza, the supreme Leader and saintly Friar who in life established a kingdom, and forever possesses the kingdom of Heaven with its supernal inhabitants: for after his numerous victories he despised all pomp, from prince becoming pauper. He erected this temple, cherished it, and has provided for its upkeep."

Now the great temple had received its finest and most pricely furnishing. And the people of Portugal knew it. They felt, almost from the very day of his death, that they had not lost him but gained him. One heard his name on the lips of every citizen far more than ever before! Word was going around that Nuno had indeed been a saint; that miracles were wrought at his tomb, or with dirt from his tomb, or even upon invocation of his name.

They began to invoke him: "Holy Count!"

As a Count he had done things for them on earth — liberating them, endowing them with his properties, defending their freedom, inculcating in them devotion to Mary and to the Most Holy Eucharist. Instinctively, they called him "Holy Count" rather than "Blessed Nuno." Such is still the case today. A few days before his death they had seen him as their hero and friend of fading vigor, with his tunic patched and threadbare, poor, lowly. But with his death, they magically forgot that he had been a mendicant friar, poorer than even the poor-

est beggar in Lisbon. Now they beheld him possessed of immortal glory. They visioned him in golden, precious robes, radiant of visage, poised between Heaven and earth. The poor, who had felt close to him, saw the lowly brother disappear among the shadows of the tomb; in his stead there emerged the Count of Ourem, the Grand Constable, exalted in glory and holiness.

Faith in "The Holy Count" increased day by day, almost beyond belief. It was like a rising tide, or a blinding dawn. Crowds of every class journeyed from far and near to his tomb. They scraped off bits of the sandstone with their fingernails, even if it was only a grain or two, and carried them away as relics and pledges of recovery to some afflicted friend or relative, especially for recovery from fever. In the course of time, by reason of this scraping, a deep trench was produced around the marble of the tomb. The people had to lower a cane into the trench "some six palms in length" in order to reach and to snatch a few of those venerated grains.

Yes, there were miracles. There at the tomb itself the blind saw, the mute spoke, the deaf received hearing, the crippled were straightened, paralytics walked. The greatest miracles of all were the resurrections of dead. Over a period of time, corpses carried to the tomb, or else sprinkled with a bit of the sand from it, came to life. (Cardoso, in his

Agiologio, says there were ten, others say there were twelve.)

The enthusiasm of the entire country knew no bounds. They would have loved Nuno anyway, even if God had not glorified him by such wonderful miracles. They would have loved him as America was to love and honor George Washington. But now they loved him boundlessly. They felt that he knew them, was interested in them, would hear them—regardless of how difficult their cases or of how unworthy they might be.

And Nuno did hear. He had loved the people so much in life that God permitted him to work for them in death.

Chronicles of the times recount many of these miracles in detail, and especially the extant manuscript of Gomes Eannes de Azurara. We would like merely to list the numbers of miracles *most publicized:* Resurrections from the dead, 10 or 12; apparitions and singular graces, 6; recoveries from diseases of the eyes, 21; healings of paralytics, 24; healing of the deaf, the mute, and those suffering from various ills of the throat, 21; recoveries from sciatica and gallstones, 18; recoveries from other diverse sicknesses, 16; recoveries from fever and from issue of blood, 10. (Chronica dos Carmelitas, I, pp. 486-559.)

These are merely some of the miracles that have

been recorded by historians. Since it is usually the case that only an odd miracle is officially recorded, judging from this number we can surmise that the beneficiaries of Nuno's intercession were in the many thousands.

Every relic of Nuno, touched or kissed, was the occasion of some new wonder. His old cap, his stick, his Rosary, all were preserved with great veneration. The wonderful reliquary with Our Lord's thorns, which he had so loved, was carried from house to house, from the hovels of the lowly to the castles of the great, to assist especially in difficult deliveries. Many suffering mothers were wonderfully blessed with instantaneous relief.

ii

Not long afterwards, King John I died and the Infante Don Duarte ascended to the throne—the prince whom Nuno had so loved. He became King Edward, the second King of an independent Portugal.

One of the new monarch's first acts was to honor Nuno as a saint.

He sent a rich silver lamp to the tomb in the great basilica on the mountain top, whither he had so often gone to visit the old Carmelite brother. He ordered that this lamp was to be kept burning perpetually, night and day.

Encouraged by this royal act, the people made offerings of candles. Pictures of Nuno were made, showing him with a halo. The clergy generally, although not wishing to anticipate any official action of the church, tacitly approved and even took part in the many subsequent public manifestations of belief in Nuno's sainthood.

One day a certain Vasco Fernandes, of Leiria, who had twice forged the King's own signature, was held in prison until he should suffer the punishment of having both hands amputated. He managed to escape, but was recaptured and brought before the King. Trembling, the poor unfortunate invoked Blessed Nuno and promised a Mass in his honor: "My Lord," he cried, "do me no harm in honor of the Holy Constable!"

"That blessed name has saved you!" the King answered. And he granted full pardon.

Soon there came the peak in the popular devotion to Nuno—for an altar was erected to him and Holy Mass was offered in his honor. Unfortunately, historical documents do not explain what is meant by "Masses in his honor"—whether the Mass had specially composed prayers in his honor ("proper") or whether it was taken from the Mass common to confessors. However, this was the final act in popular acclamation of Nuno as a Saint. In those times, it was not unusual to declare a saint by popular ac-

claim. For example, Saint Patrick was never canonized, as we understand the word today. The church authorities, by their toleration, indirectly sanctioned the general acclamation of the people and thus admitted in a way the miracles and sanctity of the person acclaimed. *"Vox populi, vox Dei."* The official decree of the Church, appointing a feast, usually followed sooner or later.

But it was not to follow soon for Blessed Nuno.

His story was just beginning. His people were to repudiate him, and he was to wait the birth, hundreds of years later, of still another Portugal, and to be an inspiration to soldiers in a war such as the world would not have dreamed possible—with bombs screaming from the sky, and rockets devastating city blocks before their sound was heard—thousands of planes darkening the sky, great machines roaring and blasting their way through towns hundreds of years old. His own people were to stray from the Galahadian model—of nearness to Mary, through Scapular and Rosary—and they were to be lost.

But he was ultimately not to be lost, nor was Portugal, nor was the world.

iii

Within a few years of his death, solemn pilgrimages were made four times a year to Nuno's tomb

and his memory was celebrated with ever greater solemnity on each November 1. On that first pilgrimage, which was set for the octave of Easter, citizens of Lisbon wore garlands of roses and formed a procession several miles long. They sang a special hymn to the "Holy Count" which ended in the line: "For the Count is a Saint!"

On this occasion, Blessed Nuno's great temple to Our Lady was decorated with literally thousands of flowers.

The next pilgrimage was in the octave of Pentecost, when the whole beautiful countryside was rich in promise of future harvest and vintage. Fishers and sailors came from Restello and Bellem, moving along the Tagus in their painted boats, decorated with wreaths of flowers and gay festoons. As the boatmen chanted gaily at the oars, others sounded trumpets, and the merry hymn to the "Holy Count . . . for he is a Saint" clung to the air. They brought as a votive a great candle, weighing over thirty pounds.

The third pilgrimage was in June, for the inhabitants of Sacaven, of Camarate, and places of similar distance from the shrine. The offering on this occasion was oil for the silver lamp which the King had placed over the tomb.

Finally, on the feast of Our Lady's Assumption—the feast that had been most important throughout

Nuno's life — the people came from everywhere, especially from Almada, and on the other side of the river Tagus. Carrying lighted candles in their hands as they climbed the mountain, they presented the pageantry of pilgrimages, in the twentieth century, at Lourdes.

One hundred years later, however, there were no more pilgrimages.

The King who succeeded Don Duarte to the throne was not so noble, and his successor completed the carrying of the people back to the slavery of sin.

How true was Nuno's advice: "God is the only true Emancipator! . . . Who is free who does not serve God?"

In 1580, Portugal was invaded by Castile, overrun, and made once again a mere colony—now of a Castile that had changed her name to the Empire of Spain, and become one of the greatest powers in the world.

Naturally the Spanish had little sympathy for the memory of Nuno. To them—and their point of view can be readily understood—Nuno was a revolutionary, a traitor. They did not harm his tomb, because they recognized his holiness even though they decried his political life. But the people of Portugal, who had forgotten Nuno's example and teachings, no longer felt safe to go to his tomb. The Carmelites, in the seclusion of their monastery

which it had now become anti-Castilian to visit, kept alive his memory. Finally, however, when it was suspected that Nuno's name was being used as a rallying point for a Portuguese revolution, the Carmelites were taken from the monastery, even mistreated, and every feast in honor of Blessed Nuno was forbidden.

iv

However, Nuno's name remained a rallying point. Within fifty years there was a revolution, and shouting the name of the "Holy Constable!" the Portuguese fought together and regained their throne.

The new King was John IV, and in one of his first Congresses—in 1641—together with all the nobility and the hierarchy he turned to Pope Urban VIII and asked for solemn beatification of the Constable, so that all the world would be forced to recognize that he was a saint, even as had the people who owed him greatest debt.

The Castilians opposed this violently. How could a revolutionary be canonized? Imagine frightening one's children to silence by threatening them with the name of a saint!

Unfortunately, the interest in Nuno on the part of John IV was more political than devotional. If the liberator and national hero of Portugal were canonized, then the enemies of Portugal would be

forced to recognize an almost divine right in Portugal's autonomy. As it was, Spaniards felt a right to Portuguese soil.

The appeal for official beatification of Nuno was met in Rome by silence.

If Portugal—symbol of any other country—had only remembered that it wasn't Nuno who could make her great and give her peace, but that for which Nuno stood: Godliness! We are reminded forcibly of the history of the Jews—of Moses, who had absented himself only long enough to commune with God, and who returned to find his people worshiping a golden calf. All the nations today who know the one True God are "chosen people," and the saints in every age are their prophets — even though often unrecognized until death.

On the Feast of all Saints in 1755—*November 1*—the anniversary of Nuno's death—Lisbon was shaken by a mighty earthquake. The whole city heaved and rocked and buildings crashed to the ground.

On top of that mountain, which the visitor sees today dominating the modern Lisbon, the great basilica built by Blessed Nuno began to rock on its mighty ramparts as though shaking itself at the country that had forgotten her Lady. Suddenly, it gave way in a roar that could be heard above all the tumult. The arches, the ogives, the great frescoes, crumbled down. Great pillars and stones ava-

lanched over the precipice. Stones of the arcades rained like a tempest upon the lighted altars, fire broke out, and the flames destroyed whatever the earthquake had spared. The second greatest Christian church in the world was no more.

In righteous anger, the prophet had broken his tablets of stone. The great statue of his Lady—holding Her Scapular—was not even to be found in the vast, dusty ruins.

14

NUNO IN WORLD WAR I

Out of the ruins of the great basilica, the Portuguese were able to retrieve the sacred body of Blessed Nuno. They preserved it with respect during the next two hundred years, and at least a quorum of Portuguese people continued to pray to the Holy Count and to hope in him.

Then came the dawn of the machine age—when streets were illuminated by gas, and steam engines ran cotton mills and pulled carriages on rails, and Napoleon III—emperor of France—allied France with England and Spain to send an expedition into Mexico using weapons of war, guns and cannon, of which Nuno had not heard.

The world was in the throes of a great change.

Basically, it was the same world. It was still true that Truth makes us free.

But men were now striving for freedom without the Truth. They were much farther from the Truth

than in Nuno's day. A group of men called "Encyclopedists" had left a mighty imprint on culture and a mighty wound in the heart of Faith. There were some who said that not only was Christ a fake, but that there was no God at all!

The world was starting down new and strange paths.

If it were not for the restraining faith, for the uplifted arms of those who still clung to their church, the subsequent punishments visited upon the world would have been far more dreadful. In Nuno's time the morals of the world had not been of the best. But now there was an ominous sign, like the hardened expression of a man who had not only sinned, but had chosen sin as his God. Men who had accepted Christ, and shaken off the chains of barbarism in the strength of Christ, were now turning against Him.

ii

At this time, after two hundred years of comparative silence, Blessed Nuno seemed again to come to life. Memory of him, which had waned, flamed up anew. He seemed to be standing there, on that mountain over Lisbon, saying: *"Turn to Mary, She will lead you to the Truth—and the Truth shall make you free!"*

Various historians began to look into Nuno's life,

and several books appeared describing him in the flash of arms, in the glory of victory, in the humility of Carmel.

Most of these scholars and writers would not admit the wonder of Nuno's miracles; they ascribed them "to the suggestion of faith," and some said that Nuno was so great a leader that he ruled and cured by hypnotism.

But all were captivated by him—by his simplicity, by his rising above court corruption to lead an entire country to national freedom and spiritual release from the bondage of sin.

By 1870, the popularity of Nuno had suddenly become so great again that the Most Reverend Angelus Savini, Vicar-General of the Carmelites, wrote to a Portuguese priest of his Order and told him to prepare all the documents necessary for approbation of Nuno's cult. These findings were published a year later in the book *"Memoria sobre a Phase Christâ do Grande Condestavel Don Nuno Alvarez Pereira."*

Nuno's best biography—among the several produced by scholars who were digging into archives and ransacking libraries for every last shred of information about him—was *The Life of Nun'Alvarez,* by J. P. Oliveira. It appeared in 1894, presenting Nuno somewhat as Werfel, fifty years later, has presented Saint Bernadette. Oliveira was an intellec-

tual, a scholar. His life of Nuno minimized the saintliness and emphasized the natural goodness and generalship. It was very acceptable to the impious as well as to the pious.

When this book appeared, bringing in its wake a national feeling for the "Holy Count," the Catholic clergy were moved by the opportunity to renew devotion to Nuno as a saint, and to the spiritual doctrine which he taught over and above the doctrine of right to self-rule. At the head of this popular movement was His Eminence, Cardinal Anthony Mendes Bello, Patriarch of Lisbon. One of his first official acts as Patriarch was to reopen the diocesan process for the approval of Nuno's cult. The Cardinal counted upon the success of this local procedure to obtain, later, supreme sanction from Rome.

Thus, in 1909—when World War I was brewing elsewhere in Europe and revolution was imminent in Portugal—his Eminence restored public veneration to Nun'Alvarez in the Patriarchal See. The solemn occasion was celebrated in the church of Saint Vincent de Flora with the Most Blessed Sacrament, which Nuno had so loved, exposed before an immense picture of him. At this time His Eminence released an indulgenced prayer to Nuno which, almost overnight, found its way to every part of Portugal.

iii

A short time later, revolution broke. King Manuel, a descendant of Nuno's, was deposed in 1910, the monarchy was overthrown, and an Atheist took power in Lisbon. Shortly afterwards war broke out in Europe, and Portugal was involved.

This revolution in Portugal was ominous. It was not a revolution intended for Portugal alone.

A group known as "Communists," teaching a doctrine of confused democracy and state supremacy, with denial of God, had organized to establish their diabolical revolution on the Iberian peninsula and in Russia. The major strength was to be in Russia. Then they would close across Europe in a pincers movement.

World War I had hurtled almost a year along its bloody course, with Portugal allied to Russia, France, Great Britain, Japan, and three smaller countries, against Germany. It was April 14, 1915. Urged by the Patriarch of Lisbon, the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in Rome, opened the judicial proceedings to examine the life and virtues of Nun'Alvarez Pereira, Brother Nuno of Saint Mary, to determine whether or not he could be called a Saint.

Events moved fast.

What would Nuno have done were he in Portugal then? The King of Portugal, descendant of Nuno's

own family, was deposed and powerless. While the bloodiest conflict in the history of the world was being fought, Russia went down to defeat in the throes of a horrible revolution, killing nobility, setting up a new kind of state—one of the fundamental principles of which was that belief in God had to be destroyed all over the earth, and all the earth had to be communized.

These revolutionaries in Russia, achieving their purpose at an hour of national distress, had long plans. Among these plans was a similar communization on the Iberian peninsula—in Spain and Portugal—that Europe might be communized immediately in a pincers movement—from Russia on the east and from the Iberian peninsula on the west.

By 1917, this communist plan was so far along its bloody way that the Russian czarist government had fallen, and an Atheist held power in distant Lisbon! Communism was ready to strike.

What a dark hour for war-distressed Portugal! What a threat to war-torn Europe!

Perhaps never before, since his death, did the people of Portugal feel such great need for the "Holy Count." The indulgenced prayer issued by the Cardinal Patriarch was prayed everywhere; Nuno's picture was displayed in homes, and carried in the streets. Once Nuno had said: "Without laying aside my Carmelite Habit (the Brown Scapular

is the principal part), but with my Rosary in one hand and my sword in the other, I will come to defend the cause of God as did Elias."

They needed him now.

"Come, Holy Count! Beg thy Lady in Heaven to work the miracle, to bring peace to the world!"

Their prayer was answered in a manner without precedent perhaps in the entire history of the world.

It was answered in a manner that affects the entire world, that proclaims to the entire world that their Nuno had the only answer to World Peace.

iv

On May 13, 1918, three shepherd children who tended flocks on land that Nuno had known so well—land that had belonged to his father, land on which he chose Mary to be his Lady and fought his first mock battles in Her honor, land on which he finally distinguished himself and fought two major battles and won two major victories. It was in his own province of Ourem, and only a few miles from Thomar, Leiria, Batalha, Aljubarrota. It was at a place called Fatima, a tiny village. The children were with their flocks about two miles from the town, on a piece of poor ground belonging to the father of one of the children. It was called Cova da Iria. The children were poor. The oldest, Lucy, was ten years old and had made her First

Communion. The other two were her cousins: a boy of nine, named Francis; and his sister, age seven.

About noon, the three children had knelt to pray the Rosary as the Cardinal of Lisbon wanted. He wanted everybody to say the Rosary for peace.

When they had finished—they said only "Hail Mary," nothing more, on each bead, so it didn't take them long. Then they turned to play house.

They had hardly begun when they saw a great flash of lightning. It frightened them. They looked anxiously at the sky. There were no clouds! The sun was shining! How could there be lightning on such a beautiful May day?

"Maybe there's a storm behind those mountains," said Lucy, the ten-year-old. "I think we'd better go home."

Her cousins readily agreed, for they were even more frightened than she.

Quickly they started after the sheep and began to herd them down the hill. When they got to the bottom, lightning flashed again. It was brighter than before. Now even more frightened, they stopped. Francis shivered. Then, as if they had all suddenly heard something, they looked to their right. There, quite close to them, above a little green oak tree, stood a lady of indescribable beauty! She was in an aura of light so dazzling that they

blinked and squinted their eyes, and were torn between fear and transfixion by such great beauty.

"Do not be afraid," the lady said. "I will not harm you."

The children looked at her in ecstasy.

She seemed to be a very young lady, between fifteen and eighteen years of age. Her dress was snow white, gathered at the throat with a golden cord that tied there, and fell to her feet. She seemed scarcely to weigh upon the leaves of the small tree. A long veil, also white, but embroidered in gold, covered her head and almost her entire person. A white string of Rosary beads, ending in a cross of the same whiteness, hung from hands which she joined before her breast in an attitude of prayer. Her face was such that the children could not describe it. It seemed to have an infinite purity and delicacy, yet it seemed that the lady was sad.

Lucy gathered enough courage to speak to her.

"Wh—, where do you come from, please?" she asked, wondering at her own courage.

"I come from Heaven."

"Why?" Lucy asked, almost forgetting her fear in the weight of her curiosity and amazement.

"To ask you to come here at this time on the thirteenth of every month for six times in succession," the lady answered. "And in October I will tell you who I am and what I want you to do."

The three witnesses, hiding not far away, jump out shouting, fearing that Jesus might have been hit. The blind one cries: "Oh! to see! If I could only see whether He has been wounded! O Eternal God, my eyesight just for that!"

"I am all right, Father, touch me," says Jesus, reaching out to him and having Himself be touched.

Deprived of his ax, Alexander pulls out a knife and hurls himself at them to strike them, cursing God, scoffing at the blind man, raging like a wild beast.

But he staggers. He stops. He drops the knife. He rubs his eyes, closes them, opens them. Then he utters a frightful cry:

"I can't see any more! My eyes... Darkness... Who will save me?"

Strong Lessons

The above excerpt from the *Poem* teaches several lessons.

The witnesses, who were about to be attacked together with Jesus, laughed when Alexander was staggering about, blind. But Jesus at once said with His usual mildness: "Do not be like him. Do not hate." And He reached out and raised the head of the blind witness, the one who was so worried about Our Lord's safety. He spoke four words:

"Raise your head. Look!"

"I can see! My eyes! The light! May You be blessed!"

The old man stared at Jesus with his eyes bright with new life, then prostrated himself and kissed His Feet.

This was typical of Jesus Who was always merciful as He was as He warned Alexander: "I have come

in the name of Justice... Be careful... God punishes... God is present... Do not defy His Goodness... this is the last hour of Mercy God grants you to repent..."

After the two words "last hour," *when Mercy was rejected,* the ax flew.

Most meaningful is what followed this incident when the holy women, who were accompanying Jesus at the time, were discussing it.

> Our Lady was silent, very sad.
>
> One of the women said to Her: "You would always forgive. You are so good. But justice also is necessary."
>
> "I would like nothing but forgiveness," Our Lady replied, "yes, only that. *To be bad must be a dreadful suffering by itself.*" And She sighed deeply.
>
> "Would you forgive everybody, really *everybody?*"
>
> "I would forgive. As far as I am concerned, I would forgive. *I see every soul as a more or less good baby.* A mother always forgives...even if she says, 'Justice exacts a just punishment'. Oh, if a mother could die to generate a new good heart for her wicked son, do you think she would not do that? But it is not possible. There are hearts that reject all help. And I think that pity has to forgive them as well. The burden on their hearts is already a very heavy one: the burden of their sins...and God's Justice.
>
> "Oh! Let us forgive guilty people! *May our absolute forgiveness be accepted to diminish their debt...*"

In the case of the wicked Alexander, Jesus left him in his blindness "that your soul may open to the Light." Even His Justice was Mercy.

But did those who died in the few minutes of the destruction of the World Trade Center in New

went about telling what they had seen.

On the next month—the thirteenth day of July—three days before the Scapular Feast — over *five thousand people* went to the Cova da Iria. And the lady made a strange, almost unbelievable promise. For a speedy end to the war, she again recommended that everyone should say the Rosary because, she said, Our Lady alone could help the world. Lucy then begged her to say who she was. Then the lady replied: "You must come every month, until October, then I shall tell you who I am, and what I want; and I shall work a great miracle that all may believe!"

She would work a miracle!

Had anyone ever heard of a miracle being promised at a certain time, at a certain place, to prove something? What was this message? She had already told them to say the Rosary, and that only the Blessed Virgin could help the world. What did She have to say? Would there really be a miracle—such that everyone would see, and have to believe?

The die was cast. If the apparition was of earth, it would be known; if it were from God, then there would be a miracle! There would be a miracle and a message . . .

vi

Now the news spread through all Portugal. The

Catholic press took no part, except to warn the people of caution. The clergy kept its usual respectful aloofness.

But the government-controlled press assailed the story, under this Atheist who had seized control of the government and was leading the country to an end the people feared but could not understand. The newspapers throughout Portugal had orders to smear the character of the children, to ridicule their story. "It would not do, at this stage," the conspirators said among themselves, "to have another Lourdes here in Portugal."

To the common people of Portugal, all this adverse publicity was good publicity. The government would not be so worked up over a trifle.

On the next thirteenth day of the month—in August—now two days before the Feast of the Assumption—tremendous crowds jammed the roads to Fatima. "From every direction," an eyewitness writes, "people poured without number. Vehicles of every description—big and small—followed one another without break. People came on foot, on horseback, on cycles; carriages and carts dotted the mountain side, motors lined the road, and there were swarms of bicycles. Newspapers put the figures as high as fifteen or eighteen thousand."

But the children were not there.

Under higher orders, the local mayor had arrest-

ed the children and had them in his chambers, threatening them with death.

"Tell the truth," he thundered to the frightened little ones, "or I'll fry you in oil! The pan is ready now in the kitchen!"

Lucy, aged ten, and Francis, aged nine, and little Jacinta, aged seven, could only stammer: "We aren't telling lies, really!"

The mayor turned to Francis.

"Tell me the secret that the lady told you," he said. He was referring to a personal message which the lady had given in the second apparition, and forbidden the children to tell anyone.

"I can't," Francis answered with a firmness that angered the petty official.

"Can't you? I'll make you!"

He seized Francis by the arm, and dragged him off. After a few minutes, which must have seemed interminable to Lucy and Jacinta, he came back.

"That one's fried already. Now," he said, turning to Jacinta, "it's your turn. Tell me your secret!"

"I can't tell it to anyone," the seven-year-old said, trembling.

"We'll see about that!" the mayor thundered, dragging her off. She was crying.

After another few minutes, he was back for Lucy.

Would she tell?

It was all a hoax. The mayor had hoped to frighten them.

"What did you feel like?" someone asked Lucy later.

"I thought I was really going to be fried," she answered, "but I couldn't say anything, and I put myself in Our Lady's hands."

The belief of these young children was greater than their desire to live.

vii

Of course the action of the mayor played wonderfully into the plans of Heaven, as does the persecution of any saint. But the lady, in a special apparition to the children on August 19 (to make up for the apparition of which they had been deprived), said: "The miracle which I was going to perform will not be as great as was intended."

That was significant.

Heaven—if, indeed, the lady were from Heaven—had intended to work a very great miracle, and had changed plans because of the scoffing of some, and because of the wickedness of an anti-clerical, anti-religious mayor. Did this mean that whatever the lady would promise would be conditional upon how people received her promise?

Such indeed was the case—as she was to declare, herself, on the final visit.

A storm of protest rose against the government following the action of the mayor. It was such a mighty storm; so vehement and farflung, that the newly established government did not know how to cope with it.

Just before noon, on September 13, the crowd that had gathered at the Cova da Iria numbered *between twenty-five and thirty thousand.*

The apparition came as usual.

This time, however, everyone saw a phenomenon.

The atmosphere became "orange," as the sun dimmed visibly when the children went into ecstasy. All through the crowd fluttered an excited murmur, as each one asked his neighbor whether he saw the same thing, and all nodded—incredulously, or in amazement. Over the oak, the crowd saw a white light, like a halo. Then, to its final astonishment, it seemed to be snowing. Flakes fell earthward, like snowflakes, and vanished a few feet from the ground.

When the ecstasy was over, people were bursting to know what the apparition had said this time.

She bade them, said Lucy, to say the Rosary for the end of the war and urged them to come, without fail, on October 13, for on that day she would bring Saint Joseph and the Infant, she would deliver her message, reveal her identity, and work a miracle.

Everyone looked forward to October 13. Roads from all over eastern Europe, in so far as the great

war permitted, led to Fatima. The world had never heard of any advertising, on such a mammoth scale, by a heavenly messenger. Obviously the five month-to-month apparitions had been "lead ons," to attract a great crowd to Fatima on October 13 that many might believe something.

What were they to believe? What message, in that hour of world need, could be so important?

Blessed Nuno had known. He had tried to tell his own country that same message hundreds of years before.

15

"RUSSIA WILL BE CONVERTED, AND THERE WILL BE PEACE"

By October 12, the roads were filled with people going to Fatima.

The next day, crowds were gathered on the hillside as far as one could see.

It rained all morning. People were wet and uncomfortable, but they stood. The ground became slushy. Some stood ankle-deep in mud. Yet no one would have left.

By half-past eleven, about seventy thousand people were gathered, waiting.

The three children arrived, dressed in their Sunday clothes. The crowd parted respectfully for them. They proceeded to the little oak tree, of which only a piece of the trunk was left because pious pilgrims had despoiled it for souvenirs.

On the stroke of midday, the children saw the apparition in the usual place. Lucy made a sign

that all should kneel and, as though moved by one imperious command, the entire crowd fell on its knees in the mud.

Remembering that the lady had said that on this day she would reveal herself, Lucy at once asked:

"Who are you, dear lady, and what do you want of me?"

And at last the Vision gave her answer.

"I am Our Lady of the Rosary," she said. "I have come to warn the faithful to amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not continue to offend Our Lord — already so deeply offended. They must say the Rosary."

Then Our Lady turned and pointed towards the sun as She disappeared.

Instinctively Lucy cried out: "Look at the sun!"

A thousand voices echoed her cry.

Suddenly the rain stopped. The clouds parted. The sun paled before their eyes and began to whirl in the sky like a great wheel of fire, and to throw off vast shafts of color—all the colors of the rainbow. After whirling in this manner a few minutes, it stood still a moment or two. Then it began again. The colors played upon the landscape, and upon the upturned faces of the stupefied throng. A second time it stopped, only for a moment. It began to whirl a last frantic time, and then seemed to loose itself from the sky and hurtle earthwards. From every

throat broke one great cry of terror. Some shrieked in fear, thinking the end of the world had come. Others cried: "A miracle! A miracle!" "I believe in God!" "Hail Mary!" "God have mercy on me!" The air was filled with the shouts and screams.

Then, as suddenly as it had come, the wonder ceased. The clouds were gone. The sun was shining serenely in the sky. Furthermore, it was attested by a great number of people, "in fact by as many as could be questioned on the subject," says one of the most authoritative writers, that when the sun had become normal "they were surprised to find that their clothes, which had been soaked with rain a little while before, were now dry."

Furthermore a woman in the crowd named Mary of Carmel, who had come at the risk of her life and stood in the rain in the last stages of consumption, was cured.

Seventy thousand witnesses — scholars, laborers, scientists, free-thinkers, government officials, pious and impious—all saw the same things. Moreover the sun-miracle was witnessed within a radius of from three to twenty miles, so there was no possibility of it having been the result of mass hynosis. Besides, the fact that it was seen over such a restricted area proved that it was a miraculous phenomenon, and that the sun had done none of the things seen by

so many, many thousands except *at the place, and at the time, predicted by the Lady.*

While this great miracle was being performed, up in the sky—beside the sun—the children saw Our Lady appear "far brighter," said Lucy, "than the sun, itself." At her side appeared Saint Joseph, holding in his arms the Divine Infant. When the sun stopped, this vision of the Holy Family disappeared. When it began to whirl again, Our Lord appeared in the sky blessing the crowd, and then Our Lady appeared at His side—this time "Dressed like Our Lady of Sorrows, but without the sword in Her breast." In the final whirling of the sun, Our Lady came—*this time in the center of the sun—and She was clothed in the Carmelite habit, and held down towards the crowd Her brown Scapular.* As She faded from view (and that was the last the children saw of Her) the sun seemed to loose itself from the sky and hurtle earthwards.

ii

The full meaning of the apparitions was not known until June, 1938, when Lucy was permitted to reveal the secret which Our Lady had given. By that time many miracles had been wrought at Fatima, and the authenticity of the apparitions had been established by the Church.

Lucy made her revelation to the Bishop of Leiria.

Our Lady had shown the children a vision of hell. It had lasted but a moment, but it had been so horrible that were it not for the assurance given on the first day—that they would go to Heaven—the children would have died of fear. Then Our Lady asked that *the world be consecrated to Her Immaculate Heart.* "After this vision of hell," Lucy said, "we raised our eyes to Our Lady and She said to us, kindly, yet with deep sadness: 'You see the hell into which the souls of poor sinners go; to save them from it God wishes to establish throughout the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If people do what I have told you, many souls will be saved and find peace. The war is going to end (it did, soon afterwards), but if people do not cease to offend God, a worse one will break out in the next Pontificate (it was about to break, though the world still hardly suspected it, even as Lucy spoke) . . . If people attend my petition, Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, her errors will be spread through the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church, the good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have to suffer much, different nations will be destroyed, but in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.' "

On October 31, 1942, at the close of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the apparitions of Fatima, Pope Pius XII consecrated the world—and especially Russia—to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and called upon all to pray the Rosary.

iii

Meanwhile, on May 5, 1917, only eight days before Our Lady first appeared to the children at the Cova da Iria, Pope Benedict XV had written a special letter, inviting the world to pray to Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace, for peace and for the end of war. The letter instructed the Cardinal Secretary of State: "To communicate to all the Bishops of the world our ardent desire that recourse be made to the Heart of Jesus, Throne of grace, and that to this Throne recourse be made through Mary. To this end we ordain that the invocation, *Queen of Peace, pray for us,* be permanently added to the Litany of Loreto . . ."

Eight days later Our Lady came at Fatima.

In Rome, at the time, was the consideration of Blessed Nuno's right to beatification. Examining the extensive documents submitted on Blessed Nuno, the Cardinals were impressed by the great Portuguese general's spiritual approach to peace—and by his preaching of the Scapular and the Rosary,

roads to that Immaculate Heart where one finds the Truth, Christ, Who sets us free.

Three months after the final apparition at Fatima—the apparition in which Our Lady held the Rosary, presented the tableaux of the mysteries, and then—clothed in the Carmelite habit—held the Scapular towards the crowd—despite the fact that the world was at war, despite all the urgencies of state and of the bleeding wounds in the body of the church around the earth, Pope Benedict XV—on January 23, 1918 — declared Nun'Alvarez Pereira *Blessed.*

The joyful news came to Portugal—in the increasing thrill of Fatima—on wings of lightning. January 23 turned into a day of rejoicing. Brother Nuno of Saint Mary, the Holy Count, had been declared Blessed! All the world would pray to him! Even as his Lady had been the Lady of the world, just as She was the Lady of Portugal, so he, too, would belong not only to Portugal but to the world.

And so would his message.

Even the anti-clerical, controlled press carried the entire decree of the Sacred Congregation. Playing up to the tremendous enthusiasm of the people, the government wished to remove Nuno's body from the royal Pantheon to the church of the Hieronymites. But since this would have been a civil honor rather than religious, setting Nuno up as a national

hero rather than as a saint, the people divined the subtle artifice and protested vigorously.

Then solemn recognition of the relics took place.

Representatives from the clergy and the nobility, civil magistrates and skilled medical men, all took part in the solemn ceremony and guaranteed its authenticity.

Everything in the casket was found to conform to the records of the several previous recognitions (in 1522, 1548, 1768, 1836, and 1906). Then the remains of the Blessed were swathed again in their coverings of white silk and deposited in a casket of nickle-plated iron. With them was placed the written account of this last recognition, the casket was sealed with the signet of the Patriarch of Lisbon, and returned to the great, ancient coffer of iron from which the sacred remains had been extracted.

A year later the government seemed more conciliatory towards religion. One of its kindnesses was to permit that the remains of Blessed Nuno be enshrined in state in the chapel of the Carmelite tertiaries in Lisbon—where it is at this moment.

Portugal had new hope.

In 1910, after being a monarchy for centuries, a revolution had dethroned the King, Blessed Nuno's descendant, and atheists had taken control of the country with a subtle war against religion.

Now, after only seven years, Nuno had been be-

atified, and the Blessed Virgin Herself had appeared in the vicinity of Aljubarrota.

Twenty-five years after this, Pope Pius XII told the people of Portugal that they should be grateful. For by 1942, at the peak of World War II, Portugal was not only able to remain neutral, but she had shaken off the atheist threat, had no national debt, and the president of the country stayed in power by threatening to resign if his policies were not followed!

The people of Portugal had finally, once again, heard Nuno's message. They had chosen Mary to be their Lady.

And they were at peace in a world at war.

iv

It is almost painful to write of such important events in such a sketchy manner. But since we are presenting the life of Blessed Nuno rather than the history of Portugal or the full wonders of Fatima, we are forced to crowd in many thoughts—leaving it to one's own initiative to ponder them separately.

It would be wrong to say that the message of Blessed Nuno is old. And it would be wrong to say that it is new.

The church has always taught that we should go to Jesus through Mary. She has, since the thirteenth century, recommended the Scapular and the

Rosary above all other Marian devotions. She has elevated these devotions, and none others, to the solemnity of universal feast days. She has heaped upon them staggering numbers of indulgences. And in recent years, Pope Leo XIII wrote encyclicals on the Rosary that proclaimed this Marian prayer an epitome of our entire Faith; and the same Pontiff, on his death-bed, said: "Let us now make a novena to Our Lady of the Scapular, and I shall be ready to die." In 1918, Pope Benedict XV, speaking to the seminarians of Rome, said: "Let all of you have a common language and a common armor: the language, the sentences of the gospel; the armor, the Scapular of the Virgin of Carmel, which you all ought to wear . . ."

And yet, this message is new in the sense that the world has never before been so called upon to *live it.* Grignon de Montfort says: "It has been saved for the latter days of the church."

Now, more than ever, we are not asked merely to recognize the importance of Mary in our soul-life, but to do something about it.

"Only Our Lady," said the Apparition, "can help the world."

Many Catholics still do not understand this.

Blessed Nuno will help.

"It is not enough," he would say, "to invoke Mary and then to act as though we had no more need of

Her. We need Her at any moment. All our actions should be directed to God only through Her. We should consecrate ourselves to Her Heart by taking Her Scapular—Her official sign of consecration—and by wearing it faithfully. We should keep a special tryst with Her, every day, in the Rosary. We should all be Her Knights and Ladies in the final battle against evil. It is She who will win the battles, despite overwhelming odds. She predicted that if we would not at first hear Her Fatima message the errors of Russia would spread throughout the world and that we would be visited with a World War more terrible than the first, that whole nations would be wiped out."

Now, surely, we have had enough signs! Surely we do not need to be convinced further! All history cries out to us, and Our Lady Herself comes with great insistency.

"Let us finally and completely choose Her to be Our Lady!"

What is the message of Blessed Nuno, and of a host of other Marian saints like him who are being raised to our altars at his late hour? What is the message of Our Lady—at La Salette, Rue du Bac, Lourdes, Fatima?

Pope Pius XII sums it all up in the words of his celebrated radio address of October 31, 1942—

words that explain why Catholic Action may have been a failure, and how it may succeed:

"We must offer thanks. The Mother of God, accepting our thanksgiving, will not leave Her work incomplete; She will continue unfailingly the patronage extended to us up to the present, and preserve us from greater calamities. But in order that this confidence may not be presumptuous, it is necessary that each, recognizing his own responsibilities, *endeavor to do nothing that would make him unworthy of the special favor of the Virgin Mother; rather must everyone strive more and more to conciliate Her motherly love.* We must listen to the maternal counsel which She gave at the marriage feast of Cana, and do all that She says. She tells us all to do penance, to amend our lives and to flee from sin, which is the principal cause of the awful chastisement with which Eternal Justice punishes the world. She bids us be, in a world given over to materialism and pagan propaganda, a sun of light to save and enlighten it. She bids us to cultivate purity, and reflect the holy austerity of the Gospel. She bids us, boldly, cost what it may, to live as sincere, convinced, integral Catholics. More still, She bids us out of the fulness of Christ to diffuse around us, near and far, the perfume of Christ and, by constant prayer—especially the daily Rosary—as well

as by such sacrifices as zeal inspires, to win for sinful souls the life of grace and life eternal.

"Doing these things we may call confidently on the Lord: He will hear us. Approaching lovingly the Mother of God, She will answer: Here I am! Then he will not watch in vain who defends the city, for the Lord will watch with him and defend it, and the house built on the foundations of a 'new order' will be more secure because the Lord has founded it. Happy the people whose Lord is God and whose Queen is the Mother of God! She will intercede and God will bless His people with that peace which is a compendium of all blessings."

And Our Lady answers: ". . . . There will be peace."

EPILOGUE

In the beginning of this book we said that it was being written especially for those battle-scarred and soul-seared by war.

That is not our choice. It is Nuno's.

He is a soldier. He fought, he saw all that was worst in war. His own brothers fell, not only at his side—but almost at his own hands.

No man fights because he wants to be a savage. He fights out of a sense of duty, honor, responsibility.

Without trying to understand the existence of war, we can understand that there are saints on the battlefields, and the stuff of saints in the men who come home. A Marine general, shortly after Guadalcanal, said: "There are no atheists in foxholes." He could have said, far more positively but with the same meaning:

"Those boys pray, or try to."

War is a catastrophe. That cannot be gainsaid. But the individual fighting man often turns it into an immeasurable personal benefit. He can take advantage of those fresh impulses to throw himself

into the arms of God, and gain in a moment that treasure more priceless than life itself: Nearness to Divinity.

Pope Benedict XV, in the official decree of beatification, declared specifically that one of the reasons why he raised Blessed Nuno to the altars during World War I was that men all over the world might be encouraged by his example of patriotism and sanctity.

"Without taking off my Scapular," we can still hear Nuno say, "with my Rosary in one hand and my sword in the other, I will come to defend the cause of God."

For the peace that has been promised to us by Her alone, after God, who could really keep such a promise, let us wear our Scapulars, say our Rosary, and wield the sword of true Catholic lives!

May Blessed Nuno be our example and obtain that all the world may soon be bathed in the light from Faima!

"Let all of you have a common language and a common armor: the language, the sentences of the Gospel; the armor, the Scapular of the Virgin of Carmel which you all ought to wear."—Pope Benedict XV.