



THE INSPIRATION OF SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS



AT the Battle of the Pyramids, in 1798, Napoleon thus addressed his army: "Soldiers of France, from yonder pyramids, four thousand years look down upon you." During this year a similar challenge is sounded to the soldier-children of Saint Dominic. To more than a people of one nation is it given. Wider its place of echo than the desert at the base of a world's wonder. For, wherever his spiritual children labor, it shall go, as go the winds of heaven. Children of Saint Dominic, seven hundred years look down upon you.



The thrill that such a message or memory will startle! Back through the years of triumphs; tracing the lands that ripened to a harvest of victories in the conquest for souls; joining the myriads of those that rise in white, as each generation of the past renews itself to life. Over the seas with the courageous of timid days, to behold the cities of older nations hailing their coming. Out through the portals of universities, sprung from the dust, wherein they were trampled by war-mad races, they come. Leaders, too, on whose brow rest the laurels that time has not dusted nor withered. From the deep-sanctuaried cathedrals; from the broad market-places, where they fed the multitudes with Christ's "bread and fishes," they gather. Is there no end to the line, as it hastens? Up from the ports, where vessels that sail to the tropics make harbor, tread swiftly another great company to the march. On their bodies they bear the death wounds that bought entrance to heaven. From everywhere, the silent, sombre convents, that sprung and spread with the dawn and lengthening of days, pour forth their solemn processions; faces unknown to those who came after, but lit now to the Light of the Lamb, in a land where none are strangers. Like that band unnumbered, the Virgin Disciple saw, so pass these before us in holy vision. Count, if you can, these marchers in white, from the tottering children to the blessed leader, whose brow holds a star.

This is the inspiration of seven hundred years.

If men's hearts swell at the recital of the deeds of a lifetime; if a people glory in the peace and prosperity of a generation; if it be worthy of boast to trace kinship to the founders of a nation; then is it right to be proud of the record of seven centuries; then is it meet to recall a peace and prosperity unmeasured of time, for the gift that Dominican zeal shared through these years, with their fellows, was a peace eternal; then is it fitting to take inspiration of the thought, we are of a family whose honors are of seventy decades?

Inspiration, indeed, in all of these. In a father and founder, who trod out a heresy, and bequeathed to the Church a prayer Catholic, as she that received it, is Catholic. In the first fruits of his spirit; those who, in sanctity and learning, were as "cities on a hill"; those who subdued the rebellious hearts of men and brought whole countries as hostages to the feet of Christ; those who heard, and did, and taught the "beati s" of the Mount.





Inspiring, too, that four of her sons were found worthy to sit upon the "throne of the fisherman"; that a daughter did much to heal the sorrows of the Church, and keep seamless the garment of Christ; that in councils her sons were never dumb; that the sanctity of her great ones has ever found the smile and favor of Christ's earthly kingdom; that from her infancy all history finds some of them in those hours, when mortal men need the ambassadors of an Immortal King; that no art or science traces back the glory of its growth, unmindful of the skilled and holy touch of Dominican genius.

With time the inspiration grows. For this relentless tester of men and deeds has shown the true metal of Dominican greatness. What more inspiring than that the ideal of a Dominicus like that of a Dominus has fitted to all times and places, and, unchanged, it gathers to-day the vintage, as when he, in person, stood by the wine-press? Who, beneath the sweet yoke of Christ, as Dominic bore it and shaped it for others, is not inspired to know that it has come down to us, through the vista of years, dim to our brief minds, unaltered? For being prophet as well as saint, he planned with Eternal Wisdom, and none has it chastened, nor once made division in that posterity born of his greatness.

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The inspiration that comes of treasures, well guarded; the treasure of the Crown of the Mother of God; of the mystery of Christ's Presence among us; of the honor of His Own name.

In days ancient the chief druid lighted a great fire, and herein the lesser priests enkindled their torches to bear the holy fire throughout the entire land. Great was the fire of Divine Love lighted by the Holy Spirit in the heart of Saint Dominic; and great and unbroken has been the line that came to share of its flames.

Knowledge, too, inspires. The knowing that the inspiration of these years has not been in vain; that in many lands the newest born of this sainted royalty, cherishing wondrous traditions, are spelling golden deeds in the Book of Life. The knowing that He Who inspired has been pleased, because He "has watered and given increase"; that He Who gives life and sustains, has given and sustained in such lengthened time.

What means this inspiration to us?

A great poet was inspired to his masterpiece by one earthly sight that became to him an unending vision.

We are beholding the fair countenance of seven centuries; the features sculptured by holy greatness; the lines drawn softly by man's highest genius; the blow lighted by the glow, lent but by eternal deeds well done. Not the face of mortal, wrinkling in age to dissolve in death's dust, but the glowing countenance of unearthy triumphs reflecting the approval of heaven.

Angels reading the record of these years rejoice, for they were battles for their kingdom. She, who is above the angels, rejoices, for all these triumphs were for her Son. He rejoices, Who bought such glories in the shame of a Cross. If all heaven, then, is filled with such joy, can we of earth be silent?

This, then, is the inspiration of seven hundred years.

THE NOVICES.

