# FATHER COUGHLIN

OF THE SHRINE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

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BY

RUTH MUGGLEBEE

# FATHER COUGHLIN of the SHRINE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

An Account of the Life, Work and Message of Reverend Charles E. Coughlin

By RUTH MUGGLEBEE

With a Foreword by
HON. ALFRED E. SMITH

and an Introduction by
ROBERT E. ROGERS

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"I LISTENED HUMBLY TO THE COUNTRY'S MOST DARING APOSTLE OF TRUTH"

*(See page 319)*

## DEDICATION

*To My Mother and My Father—*
*To All Mothers and All Fathers—*
*Whose love has been a guide to Destiny.*

# FOREWORD

*by Hon. Alfred E. Smith*

For centuries past men of the cloth have played rôles of incalculable importance in the history of the world. Their interest and expressions of interest have helped to shape not only religious destinies for their adherents, but have served as instruments in the molding and remolding of the political spheres in which they lived.

In this modern day and age a religious man has come forward to cope with destiny in shaping the ends of world living. He has youth and spirit. He has righteousness in his heart and brilliance in his mind. He uses both to preach his gospel and he proves conclusively that the man of words is greater than the man of swords.

Too often do we feel that men of the cloth have no drama in their lives. Too often do we make the mistake of thinking that men of the cloth belong only to the altar. Father Coughlin, for whom I have the greatest admiration, has demonstrated that the clergy can play its part in the fast moving spectacle of humanity, modified by the various incidents with which the cleric must necessarily be intimately connected.

Of such a man has the author written, a man who has swayed minds and captivated hearts. In his life one will find fast moving drama—the drama of con-

flicts, the drama of conquests. When the history of this period of American life is written Father Coughlin will be known as one who lifted his voice for his fellow men. The story of his life is an appealing picture of human activities which Miss Mugglebee has blended into a colorful and appreciative study of Father Coughlin, the man.

At this time, especially when the "radio priest" has served so well the cause of righteousness, it is altogether fitting and proper that a book about the man himself should come into our midst to acquaint us with the beauty of his boyhood, the simplicity of his manhood and the dominant power of his life work.

New York
January, 1933

# INTRODUCTION

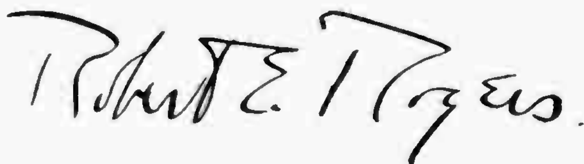
*by Robert E. Rogers*

Personalities make good books. The more striking they are, the more they arouse public interest, strong criticism and devoted enthusiasm, the better books they ought to make. The Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, the "radio priest" of the Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Michigan, is one of the most interesting personalities of our days. Within a year or two he built up a great supporting following on the air. He became one of the very small number of men of religion in the United States who are as universally known as are the stars of public life.

Both within and without his Church there has been room for drastic difference of opinion about his methods, his facts and ideas, and the value of his work. There has been, so far as I know, no question of the man's sincerity or integrity, and there can be no doubt of the influence he has wielded for the past two or three years. The author of this book pictures him as a modern Savonarola. The comparison does not seem to be exaggerated. Although Miss Mugglebee does not make the claim, it is not impossible that Father Coughlin's wide radio influence played a very real part in the result of the fight against prohibition and the election of 1932.

Miss Mugglebee has written a detailed, full and interesting work. It contains, for a book about a contemporary, a very considerable amount of carefully worked-up background material in history, sociology, theology and the Customs of the Church. From the beginning of the hero's rise to a national celebrity, the detail is thick, brilliant and often sensational. But the finest part of the book, the part that you will remember, is the first part dealing with the boyhood, the education, the novitiate and early pastorates of Father Coughlin. Miss Mugglebee pictures life in a small Canadian town of forty years ago, as well as the requirements of the religious life, with skill and charm. The young pastor comes alive for us as athlete, actor, orator, scholar, man of business, promoter and reformer. The requirements of good biography are excellently met.

The book ends rather than concludes, of course, because the man is still young and still at work. But even incomplete, the story of the career of the Reverend Charles E. Coughlin furnishes an important and characteristic chapter in the history of these times.



Cambridge, Massachusetts
January, 1933

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## CHAPTER I

*"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,*
*Rough-hew them how we will."*

—SHAKESPEARE.

TWO cowled figures, voluminously-skirted silhouettes, walked across Cathedral Square from St. Joseph's Convent, in the early morning of October 25, 1891, and in the year of Pope Leo XIII's great encyclical, to a small five-room, red-brick house at the corner of Barton and McNab streets. Their rubber-heeled shoes passed them noiselessly into the cottage, bordering on the grounds of a magnificent cathedral in Hamilton, Ontario, a province of Canada, as a town's populace sat itself down to a fortifying breakfast for the ensuing hours to be spent in labor. Within the cottage, the middle-aged and sober-miened nuns knelt in prayer at the bedside of an expectant mother. The chimes of St. Mary's tolled a guardian call. Significant bells, these, presaging a call that years later was to be of import and compelling reality.

Sharing a fervent hope and sanguine expectation for the unborn, the holy-faced women invoked Divine intercession. Their supplication was real, as was to be shown, and their humble petition a predestination of a quarter of a century of years hence. It was a religious solicitation for the birth of a child, who would be a child of the church. It was a hope expressed by religious women for a religious woman.

Softly and in unison, they prayed. They gave voice to a vision of a baby girl whose maturing womanhood was cloaked in the canonicals of the convent. Their pious murmurings continued. Still they visualized. Their prayers solicited a boy baby grown to manhood, joyously passing through transitional stages in requisite compliance with the holy orders of priesthood. The young woman, whose approaching motherhood was fast becoming active, and for whose unborn they implored the faith, cast heavy eyes heavenward, and whispered: "Amen."

Eleven months before, to the very day, on November 25, 1890, Amelia Mahoney—pronounced Ma—honey, with the accent on the first syllable, in this part of Canada—had tread the carpeted aisle to the altar with Thomas J. Coughlin, an upstanding young Irishman, foreman in one of the town's big concerns. Today, she was on the threshold of Eternity, about to embrace the crowning moment of her life. All womanhood, in true honesty, dreams of, muses on, and divinely bends in meditation to the epic of childbirth. Before infant lungs proclaimed earthly arrival, the drama of life revived from the mother's past reflective flashes in panoramic sequence—her youth, her own treasured ambition, her marriage, and now— . Amelia Mahoney Coughlin was a woman of spiritual endowments and maternal grace. She was the type of young woman to whom motherhood belonged. She was a heavenly-minded person who took religion with all the sedate solemnity and reverence prescribed by the Fathers. Her dutiful performance of religious obligations was not one of complacent sacrifice, but one of beautiful resignation. Only a few days ago, she was before the

holy sanctuary in St. Mary's, on bended knee, holding communion according to the tenets of her faith. The improvised altar at the foot of her bed gave mute testimony to the veneration with which she acquiesced to her Catholicism. Many of her relatives were of the cloth. And, now, two of St. Joseph's nuns were entreating the call for her unborn. Religion seeped in her veins.

The hurried entrance of a doctor broke the ominous hush in this small bedroom. From its window one could plainly view stained glass and a towering steeple surmounting a sacred. edifice. Quickly the nuns arose, gave vent to the traditional blessing, and departed. But Amelia Mahoney Coughlin thought on, her soft-throated voice, quaintly inflected with the lilt of a brogue, phrasing her ponderings, slowly —reminiscently—

"A girl—for the—convent—"

Her lovely mouth was parted in a faint smile.

"And, a boy—please, God—a priest—please—"

The scarcely more than twenty-year-old girl made the final sign of the cross, a completing punctuation to the pleadings of the cowled figures, when she lapsed into unconsciousness. The hands of science joined with His will in guiding Nature through the manipulations of her miracle.

Such a dramatic prologue prefaced the nativity of Charles Edward Coughlin, first and only son of his parents. Years later, he was to recall many, many times this scene in the repeated descriptions told him by his mother, who spoke of the past with profound simplicity and thankful humility, never with boastful pride. If the account of his birth has

been unusually detailed, it is to be remembered that this is the story of an unusual man.

Not too lightly is to be taken the religious influence which pre-ordained the future at his birth, or the year in which he was born, for this combination of unusual circumstances, instituted by Destiny or evolved from Fate's intricate machinations, motivated the years through which he lived. Charles Coughlin could no more dismiss with a simple gesture the divine attendance at his nascency than he could fathom the impulse which urged him onward in a mad dash "up the hill" to St. Michael's College a dozen years later, to leave standing at the gate, in bewildered and puzzled amazement without goodbye, his mother and father who as loving parents expected the customary parting of good wishes in kiss and caress. All his life he has been a creature of impulse—then, as now. Whatever the impulse, it fosters experience, cherished in secret recesses beyond penetration.

Charles Coughlin was to be an only child, though by all the laws of nature it never was to be imagined. His mother was the third youngest in a family of nine children, and his father was the oldest of the boys in an extraordinary household of sons and daughters that numbered thirteen. But at the time, Charles was simply the first-born of the Coughlins, "that pleasant young Irish couple." Five months previously, on May 15, of the same epochal year and in his fourteenth Pontifical year, Pope Leo gave to mankind a history-making document, an astounding manifesto of social justice for the working and oppressed class. Its memorable message was, forty years afterwards, to be re-embodied in the

encyclical of Pope Pius XI, and to be re-incarnated in the brilliant declamations and radio eloquence of an obscure priest. A young cleric whose Sunday sermons were to stir a country from its calamitous depths, excavating mental lethargy into a resurrection of vigorous awakening.

He was still in the cradle, tossing about in swaddling clothes, while a chaotic civilization was cutting its wisdom teeth in an attempt to digest *Rerum Novarum,* the encyclical of the great Pope of the Workingmen, sent out from the Vatican at Rome to save the world from the evils which threatened to precipitate world conflict and wholesale annihilation. Insidious forces, apparent to Pope Leo, were devastating mankind. Humanity was asleep on the edge of a volcano, a strange bedmate for its burning lava.

Again a "divinity that shapes our ends" shaped his. I make mention of this now, that mental reservation be kept, through the pages of his story, of the vital influences of his infancy which so tremendously and intensively played upon the activities of his manhood. Like the mountains which influence the climate, there is a steady stream of ethereal fluid thought to flow from the stars to affect the actions of men. Some call it Fate; others, Fortune; but futile words dissipate into nothingness in face of a baffling incomprehension of a mystical universe. It remains, therefore, that the ultimate is moulded for us by extraneous forces remotely beyond our control. The Greeks point to mythology and the Moerae, a triumvirate of goddesses, who, they maintained, determined the course of human life and spun its thread.

If earnest consideration, and rightly so, is given to the prenatal proclivity which affects the inherited state or the disposition or tendency of a newly-born, then Charles Coughlin's life was in some measure predestinated by an early desire of his mother. Long before she met Thomas J. Coughlin and was wooed and won by him, her intimate intentions were directed toward the convent. She entertained such an ambition while still a young girl, but dropped these fond plans when young Coughlin, a vigorous navvy, with soft blandishments and brawny muscle, appeared and talked of marriage. Who knows, too, but what this unaccomplished aspiration after holiness she passed on as legacy to the son she bore? Herein is very often found the "why" of an individual's greatness.

A strong, healthy line of Irish ancestry gave to this boy slightly more than seven pounds of a real good beginning. He was betokened the "image of his mother"; he had her soft, blue eyes, friends and relatives agreed with not-to-be-contradicted confidence.

Now the Coughlins were an enterprising young couple, in the ordinary sense of the word. Ever since Thomas Coughlin had forsaken the steamboats for the settled-down existence of a foreman in Harris' Bakery, one of the largest bread-making concerns in Hamilton, and a bank account, and accepted seriously-minded the responsibilities and obligations of marriage and a wife, he saved his earnings and looked to the future. Shortly after the wedding, he owned his own home, a modest and unpretentious little house, which both had planned, designed, and parented into fulfillment. Under the

wife's supervision, the back yard touched the grounds of the cathedral with ideal proximity for audible appreciation of its fine organ.

The thought of rearing children under the shadow of the church captivated the devout mother; and this observation she repeatedly impressed upon her husband. He heartily agreed with the splendid forethought, and so they were happily ensconced in the five-room bungalow, with its grounds practically espoused to the consecrated grounds of St. Mary's. Mrs. Coughlin could, and did, hurry across the lawns for morning mass, always punctual, never absent. The church—always the church—was uppermost in her mind. Especially when she thought of her child. And when others came—in the face of the church, mysteriously protected by the church. Rain or snow, cold or warm, the elements would never be a deterrent to devotionals. So, with St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral—St. Mary's of stained glass windows, all of finest Munich manufacture, erected in 1860 of Gothic design, seating a thousand religious souls, and with an organ that Hamilton folks boasted to be the finest in all Canada—on one side of their residence; and, on the other, St. Joseph's Convent and the Sacred Heart school, the Coughlins were satisfactorily assured that their son would be reared in fairly reasonable, religious environment.

Make no mistake about it. There was no fanaticism attached to Mrs. Coughlin's ardent Catholicism. She and her husband were honest, God-fearing mortals, believing in the Blessed Trinity and confession. To them, St. Mary's high altar was some-

thing of awe and beauty. When Charles was older, he too would be exalted by its splendor.

His parents both traced their origin to an honorable descent from Cork, Ireland. Mrs. Coughlin's forebears had come to the Canadian province to settle in Ontario. She was born in Strabane, but at an early age her parents took her to Hamilton. Her husband was born in Indiana, the son of an Ottawa River lumberman. He might have been born along the Erie Canal, but he had an Uncle John in Indiana who was a captain in the army and whose "powerful sword" enticed Thomas' father on frequent trips. The last visit to Uncle John was sufficient inducement for Thomas' parents to pitch stakes and take up permanent abode. So Charles' father was born in Indiana and grew up along the banks of the Wabash River. All the Coughlin men, three generations before Thomas Coughlin, had been navvies, hewers of timber and drawers of water. Most Irish, who forsook the counties of Erin to try their luck in the undeveloped and richly-endowed young America, came as steamboaters, lumber-jacks, and railroaders; and Charles' great-grand parentage was no exception. At sixteen, Thomas Coughlin joined the forces of navvies and steamboated the St. Lawrence River between Montreal and Sault Ste. Marie. It was a bit of a struggle, though the connotation of the word has changed with evolution's progress and the days when he cracked ice to get water and guarded his nose precautiously against freezing—and thought nothing about it. It was then that men wore red flannels with unashamed comfort over Herculean muscle and robust physique. To effete youth of this

FATHER COUGHLIN'S MOTHER AS A YOUNG WOMAN

day and age, parentally indulged and pampered, enslaved to a jazz-maddened philosophy of hedonism, the simple and ordinary yielding to a North Canada winter might work hardships. But to Coughlin it was a rigorous youth well spent.

But now that was over and done with. He had an established employment. He had taken up a methodical way of life and had assumed the duties of a householder. His life's station was as dry, as firm, and as hard as the ground after rain or frost. He was free from uncertainty. The quiet, the calm, and the composure of a happy marriage was his to enjoy; and he had a son to think about, a child sprung from perfect harmony and love. Established in life, in business, and in home—this was living. He had possessions, nurslings of contentment. All in all, it was a good start for him and his small family. Undisturbed middle-class they were, with enough of everything and not too much of anything.

Eighteen months after the birth of their son, the Coughlins sheltered a brief but tragic interlude. Charles was a year and three months old when a sister, Agnes, was born to them. Three months later she died in comparative infancy, surrendering to the boy an uninterrupted resumption as an only child. When he knew the meaning of filial relations, he was told he had a "sister in heaven." This he never forgot. Memory serves us best when tinged with sadness. Not so easily can we forget what we wanted but could not have. And Charles, who wanted a sister, never relegated to dim forgetfulness the thought that he had a baby sister who died.

"The world's a theatre, the earth a stage,
Which God and Nature do with actors fill."

His stage was set. He was to be a new type of actor, portraying an ecclesiastical rôle in a drama of human affairs. Each act was to bring him plaudits and hero-worship. What of the final curtain?

## CHAPTER II

*"Happy he*
*With such a mother! faith in womankind*
*Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high*
*Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall*
*He shall not blind his soul with clay."*

—TENNYSON.

CHARLES was four or thereabouts, a bright captivating little fellow, with luminous eyes and the esthetic face of a girl, but the finely-formed and healthy body of a boy, when his parents grimly realized that he, alone, would break bread with them as the days rolled on. His mother grieved about nature's idiosyncrasy which allotted to her household only one child, and then, of necessity, relinquished maternal yearning for a large family, like the one in which she herself was brought up, to the peremptory needs of a growing youngster. "I'll make the most of this one." She found, in this hopeful platitude, extreme comfort.

If I make mention of this intimate family detail, it is only to prove my own sentimental and new-fashioned theory about an "only child." With mother love, sympathetic, understanding, all-enveloping, expressive of the devoted trust of a magnanimous woman, she did more than a full family of several sisters and brothers in whose exemplary behavior repetitive example is said to be found.

The unselfishness of religious will is a human fac-

tor too often overlooked in the "mother-fixation-complex" doctrine incorporated in the calloused pryings of sociologists and psychiatrists. From her, Charles received confidence and kindness, unchallenged, perhaps, over-indulgent to inspire the every fibre of his being. She taught him "the luxury of doing good." She was his Shepherd leading him "through paths of righteousness and green pastures." She was not the type of "good woman" of whom Louis Bromfield wrote, "America has more than her share." Hers was a beauty of soul reflected in tenderness.

As a baby, Charles was alert and alive to every sound; as a boy, wholesomely mischievous, rugged, and strong; tolerant, tender-passioned, noble-minded as a youth sweeping onward to a manhood of self-denial, charity, and self-control. As a four-year-older, he was his parents' only "pride and joy," but Mrs. Coughlin's health at about this time was none too good and she finally entered a Catholic hospital directed by a Sister Superior.

Mrs. Coughlin spent many months getting well. One day, when the doctors said she might, her husband brought her boy to see her. He wore a blue and white kilted sailor suit. Contrary to popular imagination, it was a suit; and young Hamiltonians, though not many, wore similar fashion, despite the absence of short trousers to indicate youthful masculinity. A pleated skirt, triple-chalk lined around the hem for decoration, swayed in circular motion a few inches above soft-leather button shoes. And if you particularly noticed, the same decorative lineal motif was extended on the sleeve

cuffs and around the deeply-white bordered square collar. Four small buttons held fastened the navy blouse and brought to a point its V-shaped neck line. Even bangs were pressed across an impressive forehead, slightly above firm eyebrows; and home-curled ringlets hugged his ears into obscurity; all in all framing a full, fair-complexioned face.

There you have Master Charles Edward Coughlin in his best bib and tucker, decked out in sartorial splendor, like a shop-window doll on display, to meet the approval of a fastidious mother. To this day, he remains disposed to the traditional importance of fastidious dress inculcated upon him in childhood.

As sick-chamber visits go, it was casual and unsurprising. It would be hardly worth retelling were it not that in the retrospective fingering of the biographical pages of a man's life, an incidental conversation suddenly looms as a concerning episode, to countenance, in view of what has followed, the fated indication to which he was irresistibly drawn. We must not pass over the little things, the insignificant, seemingly inconsequential evidences; for they are the putty of plastic youth from which life moulds a marble figure of distinction or a tinsel god with feet of clay.

While Charles and his father were in happy reunion with Mother Coughlin, one of the nursing sisters who waited on her during her illness entered the room. Maybe it was with adult patronage of the young, or perhaps for lack of something more engaging to hold the boy's attention, that the sister questioned him so:

"Well, have you decided what you're going to be when you grow up?"

Charles dropped her hand, and opening wide his soft-blue eyes, looked up at her and said:

"I'm going to be a priest."

"Oh, a priest. And you're going to be a bishop, aren't you?"

"No," he answered thoughtfully and with decisive conviction. "I'm going to be a priest first."

He might have been an average youngster and recited an ambition of a glorious future as motorman, policeman, or prize-fighter, as children do; but this lad had an idea, pregnant with meaning, when only immature intelligence was to his credit. There was nothing premeditated about that brief declaration, nor had its contents been rehearsed. Neither parent had told him what to say in proud exhibition of a son's obvious brilliance. It was the first time the boy had so expressed himself, even before his parents, and to them it was a startling admission, fraught with possibilities. Yet, it must be undeniably conceded, as far as this narrative has gone, that the boy, in his heart, young as he was, unconsciously had the desire to serve his God and be of productive service to humanity. At seven, it was an enrooted idea enriched by the aristocracy of a compatible home-life, requiring in addition the religious category to yield reality. There cannot and should not be a psychological explanation for everything said or done by a child; but when the consummate whole of one's life points back with recurring forcefulness to the engaging similarity of periodic sign posts, we must humbly bow in recognition.

Rainbow-colored flowers on a white table near the open window caught the boy's fancy, and at once he was engrossed. The sister smiled and left the

room and Dad Coughlin advised his wife not to think too seriously about what the lad had said. But husbandly admonition failed of impression, for a new world of thought had come to Amelia Coughlin. Maybe, maybe. In her mind, she thought back a few years.

Not long after, Mrs. Coughlin, completely restored to health and strength, returned to the little house at Barton and McNab streets, and busied herself with preparations for Charles' approaching school days. St. Mary's separate school stood ready to receive him. Co-education was not part of the curriculum of this parochial institution; and, as the name implies, girls and boys pursued their studies in buildings apart.

At the age of five, Charles made his first, real pilgrimage to the classroom. He was a happy youngster, eager to assume the new adventure, unfrightened by the leave-taking of his mother; an eagerness accentuated by the knowledge that playmates would be there to join him. Just before setting out, his mother gave his curls a final patting twist, and again brushed into neatness the hanging folds of his blue and white kilts. She took hold of his hands, glanced at the *tout ensemble* with approving satisfaction, and then drawing him close to her, cautioned:

"Now, mind you, Charlie, keep yourself clean; and be a good boy; and don't speak unless the good Brother speaks to you. Sit quietly like a good boy in your seat and listen."

"All the time, Mother? Don't I play?"

Here was a substantial boy revealing himself, a boy who made merry of running and jumping and

playing tag, of soiling his clothes and dirtying his hands. Mrs. Coughlin laughed and sent him along. She stood on the long piazza watching her growing man start off for learning. There might have been tears in her soft eyes, but this is still a debatable issue. His firm, solid body strode rapidly up the street, and when it turned the corner, she knew that presently her son would pass into the educational care of others. But it was the teaching order of the church that was taking him in hand, and she was content.

He climbed the stairs to the classroom, and was about to cross the sill of the door when an imposing figure appeared before him, halting his entrance. Quizzically, the Christian Brother looked down at the stripling, curls hanging down his neck, a boy seemingly in girl's dress. To be sure the Brother knew that the lad was Charlie Coughlin, but he was a good-natured disciple of St. Thomas Aquinas, venting a capricious temperament on those too young to appreciate his humor, or comprehend.

"Why, you can't come in here."

Charlie looked up at the huge hulk of the man and was awed by his flowing presence, amazed into speechlessness by his command. Little Charlie, who never was at a loss for words, who could always answer when spoken to, was unable to ask why. Surprised little boy, he stood rooted to the spot.

"This is a boy's school," the Brother continued, concealed laughter unbetrayed by a restrained visage of Christian sobriety. "You're a girl; go to the girl's school."

Finally Charles spoke up. There was a charm in his voice.

"But I am a boy; I'm not a girl."

With feigned expression of deep thought and an accusing eye on the little boy, the Brother shook his head in sad doubt.

"Well, I'm not sure. You go home and ask your mother. Then come back and tell me what she said."

Unsuspecting child, he turned away and retrieved homeward footsteps in unquestioning obedience. His little feet hurried up the stairs and into the kitchen of the red-brick cottage. Mother Coughlin, who naturally could not bear to have him out of her sight, rushed from the parlor, a world of alarm flashing through her thoughts in the second. She found him standing in the middle of the room, apparently distracted, perplexed. But before she could gather him up in her arms, he inquired, and to the point:

"Mother, am I a girl?"

"Of course not, Charlie." Smilingly, she heaved a sigh of relief. "You're a boy, and—sometimes—you're a good boy."

With a parting kiss, Charlie went back to school. Again he neared the threshold of the classroom, but he didn't enter. He waited until the towering Brother approached him. And when he looked down benignly at the kilted figure, Charlie spoke up with supreme confidence.

"It's all right. Mother says I am a boy; and, sometimes, I'm a good boy."

It was an earnest declaration of faith, not only in himself, but in the mother he so dearly revered. More than thirty years later, he said:

"There never was a kinder woman born."

Charlie took his seat, said no more, and became one of a group of potential scholars. The name of the Christian Brother is forgotten with the passing of years, but the memory of this revealing circumstance is a pleasant flashback in a life pledged to high purpose, marked by no recriminations, singled out for fame, glory, and deserved tribute; in a life free from the lies, the lusts, avidities, conniving trickeries of a mammon-ridden civilization.

His first day at school was over! And the boy came tearing down the middle of Barton street, yelling, having a "great, old time," even if his curls streamed behind him in the breeze and kilts encircled his sturdy legs as he ran. And after him came other boys, older boys too, participants in a game that only youth understands, duly esteems, and intrinsically values.

Charlie's first cousin, Millie Carson, who later became Mrs. Millie Carson Keating, with continued domicile in Hamilton, Ontario, was five years older, and likewise was returning home from school. It is still a vivid recollection with her—a lingering of gone days, cherished reminiscences of the enchanted past—that day, that race, her young cousin. So she ran ahead to tell Mother Coughlin of the extraordinary doings of her boy, and when she reached the house, she called out:

"Auntie, Charlie's coming. He's running down the street. And he's yelling."

Millie was a sweet-faced girl, with whom Charlie skated and coasted, and spent many, many happy hours at play. She didn't know that it was her cousin's manner of proving to himself that he was a real boy who could run as fast and shout as loudly

CHARLES COUGHLIN AT THE AGE OF SEVEN YEARS

as other lads. The kilts and curls were forthwith to constitute a minus quantity in what Mrs. Coughlin considered an integral part of a well-dressed boy's wardrobe. Subsequent to this demonstration, Charlie played upon his mother's tenderness until she wilted into submission. From that time on, he was a boy about whom there could be no mistake. And though it broke his mother's heart to do it, Charlie's curled locks were shorn into straightness, his kilts were given elsewhere in charity, and the boy, in the metamorphosis, emerged a little man.

Primary schooling did much for him. He wasn't shy and he made friends easily in the classroom. He was a likeable lad, gifted with personality which in formative years drew many followers. After school hours and the activities outlined for him in his mother's program, he enjoyed a natural course of reckless abandon, disporting himself with wholesome, childish glee. His mother's persistent desire to keep him fastidiously garbed was futile during play time for, like most boys, torn breeches and muddy shoes, to his belief, were tantamount to fun and frolic. Only on Sunday and other special occasions, when later with Leighton Hanrahan and W. H. Furlong, now a distinguished barrister of Windsor, Ontario, he served as acolyte for St. Mary's, could the anxious parent present an impeccably dressed son. There is a picture of him at seven and it still lives. His face was a bit thinner; his eyes, still luminous, were somewhat pensive; his hair, parted on the right side, was smoothed away from a high forehead. It shows, too, a straight nose and a mouth that closed in musing thought, a firm, round head.

Charlie played his games hard. And those set-tos that boys, however friendly, have during school-yard recess, he experienced in like manner. Young Furlong, Charlie, and Leighton, since grown to a consequential manhood of lay importance in Toronto, were "pals." They played together and fought for each other, in the school-yard and out of it. They were altar boys together; they were choir boys together; they served mass together in a boyhood bound up with St. Mary's. Yet boys will be boys and Charlie's rip-roaring pursuit of fun and risk-taking often found an impressive counterpart in a strap of cat-o'-nine-tails.

But at this time, none of which can be dated, and can only be given general reference during this period, he would corral his mother, seat her in a chair, lean his stout little body against hers, and, with arms entwined around her neck, ask of her, his bright, clear eyes staring into hers:

"I had a baby sister and she died, Mother, didn't I? Is she really in Heaven?"

Mrs. Coughlin, from her own limited experiences, unable to unravel the caught-up-strings of his mind or figure out to her own satisfaction the reason for his serious query, would simply say, "Yes." And Charles would release her and lose himself in other things.

As much as possible, she tried to keep her boy at home. She didn't deny him boy's freedom and bracing pleasures, but there was no gallivanting about for the young lad with strange boys into strange places. Hers was a homely and natural philosophy that mothers are the makers of men and that a parental environment abounding in affection was a

mighty moulder of sterling character. Mrs. Coughlin was a "working" mother who was never caught loafing on the job. She had a healthy concern for her son which penetrated the inner niches of his soul to lay dormant until such time when itching emotions needed rationalizing and stabilizing. She stood at the front of the house when he left in the morning for St. Mary's; and she stood watching for the first sight of him as he came running along from school. And it was not because she "babied" him, not because she wanted him tied to apron strings, not to develop a "goody-goody" man, but because he was her only child, her whole life, a trust given to her for safe-keeping, a designated appeal to her human instincts as right. And when she exerted control in trying to keep him from going far away to play with other boys, it was an innate voice sanctioning her guardianship.

"Now, Charlie, there's a good place right in front of the house where you and the boys can play your ball and your games," she said to him, knowing full well that the long piazza was a place of vantage where she could sit with watchful eye on the lad's doings in assurance that he was always all right.

The boy was a natural lover of sports. He learned to swim with rare prowess, surreptitiously, since parental authority would have willed differently for one so young. He had a zealous attachment for baseball, developing at this time of life a power to perform and a sufficiency of strength that not long afterwards fortified an energetic fitness by which he smashed his way to Canadian fame as an athlete.

With dutiful appreciation for the artistic expan-

sion of her boy, Mrs. Coughlin sent Charles to Sister Aurelia, at St. Joseph's Convent, to study pianoforte. He was about seven when the infliction to take music lessons took hold. He took lessons under protest and practiced under protest and at the very first opportunity renounced them. But not before a diploma authenticating his proficiency in music was duly inscribed in the name of "Master Charles Coughlin."

It was one of the hard and fast rules and regulations of Mother Coughlin's training that, directly after school, one hour of his time must be devoted to conscientious piano practice. There was no denying his mother's will or intention, and much against his own will he thumped the white and black keys in dinning conglomeration of unmelodious sound. Not even the distant promise of music could be gleaned from his savage poundings, but it was noise and since it dwindled into tonal faintness when it reached his mother several rooms beyond, he got by. Little he cared about the system of tones based on their relation to a keynote or the plaintive combination of sounds that was an etude or nocturne. He bluffed through the cold-weather months, but when spring ushered in her first rush of warmth, a devastating temptation taxed him beyond his power to resist.

There had been times, twice, when Charles, with music portfolio under his arm, wended his way to St. Joseph's Convent, totally unprepared. Try as hard as he might, unflexible fingers were incapable of ascending and descending the scales. His chubby thumb stubbornly refused to slide underneath his third finger to move in rhythmical sequence to the fourth key. If Charles had performed this task re-

peatedly in conscientious home practice, the chubby thumb would have slipped easily into place and to the specified scheme of intervals in graduated series. Sister Aurelia's displeasure would not have been incurred and Charles would not have been subjected to utter humiliation, for so it seemed to him. Sister Aurelia penalized her music students in an inimitable way when they came to her in blissful ignorance. Charles took his dose along with the rest. She sat him in a chair outside the music-room, in the corridor, and there was no escaping. Other sisters passed and smiled knowingly and said teasingly:

"We know what you're here for—dunce."

As I said, it happened twice, and the dignity of the little chap was wounded twice. The second, and last time, he rushed home to his mother, crushed by the abasement of his pride.

"Mother, I was ashamed to-day. I did not know —I couldn't play—my music lesson for Sister Aurelia, and, Mother, she made me sit in the corner."

"Sister will punish you that way every time you do not know your lesson, Charlie," his mother warned him sternly.

"She won't punish me like that again, Mother. I will always know my lesson. I will not be ashamed again."

Mrs. Coughlin smiled—wise parent.

Music may be an inspiring art for children and, as it is maintained, "so beautifully helpful in later life," but to a knee-breeched, full-blooded boy, compulsorily housed in acquisition of its charm, it is a thorn in the flesh when his friends are out of doors tossing a ball and running for base. One day, Charlie thumped the keys but his mind and heart

were through the window and with the progress of a ball game. He squirmed in his high-backed piano seat. He tried so hard to push temptation into dim regard. But the allurement became too great when the boys re-appeared at the window with a husky "come on—aw, come on." When it wasn't any use any longer, he left the piano and jumped over the casement and joined the game.

Ubiquitous reckoning crowded him when the game was over and he had had his fling. The unfailing love of his mother was certain to fail him this time. She could be as stern as she could be loving. He hung around the church play-ground until the clock sounded six and then he bounded down the street to meet his dad, returning home from work. Under his dad's protection, he marched into the house. Only cursory mention can here be made of the softness of fathers. Always the kind, the patient, the adoring mother must steel herself for the spanking, though with each strike there is an unconquerable, sympathetic suffering in her heart. Dad Coughlin offered to "let the lad be."

Although Charles had a smart notion before he jumped out of the window to throw his mother's cat-o'-nine-tails behind a big picture in the parlor and did, and it wasn't discovered until the next spring housecleaning, his mother had an efficacious substitute for punishment. Under maternal instructions, he hung his head in a corner of the room, and kneeling down, with hands in prayer, he said:

"Mother dear, I'll never do it again if you'll let me off this time."

There were repetitions, naturally. For he was a boy. But the pain and sorrow that is the lot of

AS A CHOIR BOY AT ST. MICHAEL'S
(CHARLES COUGHLIN IS THE YOUNG BOY AT RIGHT IN THE FRONT ROW)

some mothers; the anguish that dims their eyes and blights their souls; the torment that wracks their hearts and crushes them beyond redemption; the unsparing cruelties of selfish children; the self-interested alienating ambitions of the young; the miseries of wanton sons and daughters—never was Mrs. Coughlin to know such human brutalities, never was her sunny horizon to be clouded.

Spring melted into summer. Charles played ball and swam and hardened his muscles by outdoor pastimes. He shot up like a weed and was a good-sized specimen for his years. He was a model pupil and one of the few boys that Sister pointed to with a teacher's pride. Years later, many years later, Sister Aurelia described him as a "beautiful boy." But even "beautiful boys," whether of face or of soul, have peculiar longings, and "tea and toast in bed" was this little man's special diversion. It was one of his greatest delights to have served to him, propped up in his bed in the morning, this delicacy which only his mother could serve suited to his palate.

He had headaches, too, but these were the shams of a feigning boy, spirited with cheerfulness. Several times Charles managed this ruse, but when Mother Coughlin discovered the playful pretense, well—

Charles would wake up in the morning and make claim to a fearful headache. He would hold his compact head in his hands and appeal for Mother's sympathy. Arising was a physical impossibility, he pleaded, and "Mother, please bring me my toast and tea in bed." A worried mother, patient beyond one's wildest dreams, would hurry to him with the

delicacy. The young son downed the food with extreme relish. No sooner had the school-bell rung—the boy could hear its gong from his bedroom—when, after lying abed for the better part of an hour, he would miraculously lose his headache and jump out of bed. This continued for some little time, at periodic intervals. Mother Coughlin finally applied the cure.

"And why have you a headache this morning, son?" she demanded to know one morning.

"I don't know," he admitted woefully.

"Well, Charlie Coughlin, Mother knows the cure for you," she promised. "There will be no tea or toast for you this morning. And you'll stay in bed, mind you."

She spoke forbiddingly, drawing her words into a severe reprimand; but in her eyes the boy discerned pretended austerity.

"Are you mad with me, Mother?" Charles cautiously inquired, and smiled.

Then they both laughed, and half an hour later the lad was at school. He enjoyed the work and was an apt student, but the monotony of routine palled on him. His was a vibrant personality, alive, active, dynamic. He was not easily ruffled or provoked. He gave as well as he took and he was unafraid to lift his face to anyone.

## CHAPTER III

*"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,*
*So near is God to man,*
*When Duty whispers low, 'Thou must,'*
*The youth replies, 'I can.'"*

—EMERSON.

THE boy grew older. And he grew older in a home life that could have been made no more pleasant had untold wealth committed its appointments to the lavishness of luxury or permitted him free indulgence in costly gratifications. Reared in a home atmosphere cleared of ostentation, he harbored an inherent dislike for pretense. He was jubilant in cozy surroundings, middle-class solidity, of comparatively poor but honest parents who drove an average small salary over long, purchasing mileage. There were friendships cemented by mutual enjoyments, not to be ended in boyhood. He had a father who found unmitigated joy in dedication to hard work that those near and dear to him and dependent upon him might be content; and a mother whose beatitude pivoted on the axis of his own happiness.

As he became a man among men, he was now a boy among boys, admired, trusted, happy-go-lucky, the cynosure of young eyes of the late nineties as he held up his chin and treadled a high-wheel tricycle up and down Park street and through Cathedral Square—one of the first three-wheel "bikes" seen in the fair city. From boyhood he was stamped a

"regular," under the terms of man's colloquial, though lazily worded, glorification. He merited his initiation into young Hamilton's choice contingent, when quietly, after dismounting from his vehicle, he reached down, picked up a stone, and deftly sent it sailing over a building top by the simple flick of the thumb and index finger of his right hand. This after he had silently stood by and watched other youngsters try and try, in failure, to fling pebbles over a nearby roof. Pebble-throwing, incidentally, has a place in the later pages of this story. Charlie towered head and shoulders over his nearest competitor, not in physical dimensions, for growth was accompanied by thin wiriness, but in understanding, that certain, inexplicable something which goads us on and on to loftiness.

It is authentically recorded in the minds of Hamiltonians that Charles Coughlin first stepped on to the lecture platform at the age of seven. In annual exhibition, Sister Anna directed a concert of St. Mary's student talent, to which each class made some contribution of pleasing entertainment. Charlie's class was slated to perform jointly. The boys marched out from a back room on to the stage of St. Mary's Assembly Hall, struck their poses, and took their cues. Their recitation, to the recollection of Hamilton's best memories, jingled a catchy doggerel that substantially was this sing-song:

"When we grow up, when we grow up,
We little tots so small,
We're going to climb life's greatest heights,
If we can't climb, we'll crawl.
And now we're going to tell you

Just what we're going to be
When we advance in later life
Upon the land and sea."

So far so good. Appreciative relatives applauded thunderously. Then each pupil stepped forward, spotlight upon him, and embellished the theme by a further rhyming declaration of future ambitions that ran the gamut of trades and professions. It was now Charlie's turn and the lad braced himself into position. Neither haltering nor faltering, with gestures and practiced tonal inflections, he versified stirringly:

"When I'm a man,
I'll be a mason if I can.
Buildings I'll build, and I think I'll be able
To build one as high as the Tower of Babel."

Aside from the praise, Mother Coughlin rewarded her "young speaker" with an extra indulgence of cream puffs. The boy had an insatiable craving for this dessert. It was practically a vice. It took years to wean him from the sweet.

One day in his ninth year, Charles came home from school troubled, the smile rubbed off his features.

"Mother," he began, "I want to wear my Sunday suit to-morrow to school. You'll let me, won't you?"

Mrs. Coughlin was taken aback. Had her boy become clothes-conscious, she thought, wanting to wear his Sunday best on a week day?

"Of course, Son. Why? Whatever do you want to do that for?"

"I know a poor boy and I thought if I wore my Sunday suit to-morrow I could give him this one—the one I'm wearing. Please say yes, Mother. He needs it so bad."

Without further ado his wish was granted. Mrs. Coughlin silently praised God for the kind-hearted boy that was hers; not that Charlie had more, but for the awakening in his heart of charity, sweetest of all virtues, for the lad who had less. Already the boy was giving evidence of the great attributes which forged him into the ranks of God's nobility. So soon he was an individual, thinking for himself, unconsciously cognizant of the tragedy which robs some of necessities and gives to others an abundance. The philosophical egg was hatched. If his young head lacked the verbal dictates of his thoughts, he had the emotional rousing of scholasticism.

There was a time, not long afterward, when the boy was swallowed up in mob psychology. Only once, however. He was a fourth-year pupil and, though St. Mary's classroom was a constant reminder of the goodly teachings of the gentle sisters, he mis-stepped humanly. In their reflected tenderness coincident to his mother's gentility and sublimation, he created the pinnacle of his unending exaltation of all womanhood. But one day he erred with the others. It was wise, perhaps, to have lost himself so, for if he had not, neither he nor his friend, Furlong, would have escaped "canonization" and unsafe wrath at the hands of their classmates. Nor would they have been able to live down for the remaining few years of learning at St. Mary's the condemning and epithetical "sissy" of waggish youth, self-appointed appraisers of virile courage. As I

write, looking out from my high-up window over a lake of unruffled calm in the hushed serenity of the Maine woods, my own thoughts rush back to a recollected childhood and I am amused, for in its unwritten annals, as in yours perhaps, there is memory of similar experience—child's play.

"I shall be back soon. Be good until I return. I won't be gone long."

With this reprehensive caution, the sister in charge left her young wards on their own honor, but no sooner was her flowing habit swept into disappearance, when the entire class—Charlie and young Furlong mischievously disobedient as the rest—arose and marched out in a body. They returned the next day in full attendance, the import of their dereliction a vague but taunting overcast. The sister lined the whole group against the wall and with sweetly-spoken grievance, confessed her sadness over their violation of her trust. The hat of the guilty hung heavily on Charlie's dark-brown head. The unfaithfulness of duty irked him. He didn't whimper. He accepted willingly the fitting climax to his misbehavior and as the sweet and gentle sister ordered, knelt in prayer for half an hour on hard boards with the other miscreants.

"Served us right," Charlie defended the sister while the others sulked.

"I do remember, and that poignantly, that we all wanted a holiday. We were fed up with classroom. It was early autumn and we hadn't acclimated ourselves to school regime," Furlong finished the story years later. "Most of all I think the sister was hurt over the disobedience of Charlie and myself. She said she never thought her two good boys would

commit an infraction. The fact is, Charlie and I were fairly good boys."

A few months later, shortly before Christmas, Lake Ontario had frozen hard into ice and Hamilton shivered with the cold of winter. Snowball pelting was in good season. George Hamilton and his followers, who colonized Hamilton in 1813 on a plateau of slightly elevated ground winding around the foot of a hilly range, would have turned in their graves at the perilous adventures their pioneering furnished. But Hamilton was a chosen spot for sports and no one made more fruitful use of its offerings than did the boy Charles.

"We've got to have a bob-sled," he advised a friend.

"Sure we have," his chum agreed readily. "But how are we going to get one and where? Who's going to get one, Charlie? I guess it is up to you. Nobody is going to buy one that I know of. Anyway, it is your notion."

"Well, we can build one, can't we now?" urged Charlie.

"With what?"

His friend eyed him curiously with an inquisitiveness that savored of denunciation.

Charlie laughed and told the boy to come along.

"My mother has an ironing board. It'll be just what we need," he promised.

The pair scampered off into the house and from its secured corner Charlie and his friend lifted Mother Coughlin's ironing board. It wasn't a newfangled affair that with the impertinent pushing of a button charges out of nowhere in twentieth-century apartments, sprung into readiness. It was a piece

"AS A BOY CHARLIE WAS RUGGED AND STRONG"

of timber sawed thin, relatively broad and long, and leveled into smoothness by a planing mill. Mrs. Coughlin would set it up between the stove and a chair; or between a table and a chair or any two objects that would support it for ironing purposes.

"How about a sled seat?" the friend demanded, still unconfident of Charlie's ingenuity but secretly impressed by his chum's inventiveness.

"Now wait," argued Charlie. "And follow me."

The boys descended into the cellar, Charlie leading. There he enlisted his friend's service, and both together held an iron poker through the furnace door over red-hot coals until the scorching heat reddened their timid faces. While the boy held the ironing board tightly, Charlie applied the poker-torch until holes were burned out in required places.

"Gee, you're smart," Charlie's friend praised him. "I didn't think you could do it. Wait'll they see this."

"Never mind that now. We want a sled, don't we?"

In sober truth, Charlie was thrilled by his chum's appreciation. But he declined to honor the "fair-haired" apprizement of his capabilities. They scouted around for the remaining parts for the home-made contraption, dug up without much further trouble, and when the bob-sled gave a facile demonstration of satisfaction, Charlie escorted his "pal" out of the house. There is no denying the boy's adroitness. He knew a "hawk from a handsaw" and when occasions demanded, he exhibited always a rare ingeniousness, a skill for organization that was substantiated in adult maturity.

"Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille
sich ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt."

And such "heart to conceive, the understanding to direct or the hand to execute," Charlie evinced in early life, to guide him through fertile fields in the Vineyard of Christ. Though the desire be strong to pause for surviving proof of childhood symptoms, we must get on.

The next day was Tuesday and Mother Coughlin's ironing day. A systematic housekeeper, she could lay hold of household implements with eyes shut. But in the closet, in the vestibule leading directly from the kitchen, the ironing board was not to be found. Impossible that it was nowhere in sight. Couldn't be, she figured. It was there last week. Was her boy up to something again? Dear me, dear me. She hunted hopelessly in places which her better judgment despaired of. Her weary feet trudged slowly down into the cellar. There, close by the coal bin, defiantly stood the bob-sled ironing board. That day taught young Charles a good lesson. It made a deep impression on him. Yes, a very deep impression. While Charlie's mother demonstrated concretely her unswerving faith in the proverbs, her hands administering what was coming to him, she repeated, for his edification, no doubt:

"He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but
he that loveth him correcteth him betimes."

It was a timely administration, though the need for repeated dose was not often.

The next week Charlie used his sled to better ad-

vantage. Skating on the lake at the same time was Cousin Millie, christened Mildred, but affectionately abridged in endearment. The wind was high and their hearts were jolly. Millie skated along dragging after her, on his home-made sled, Charlie. It was pretty hard going and Millie was making quite a job of it, trying to skate, hold her balance, and ride her cousin at a gait that he repeatedly urged her to acquire. Then both of them, almost at the identical moment, spied an ice-boat, standing still, ready to go.

"Hitch on to it, Millie," Charlie shouted. "It'll be fun. We'll go fast. It'll be a grand ride."

"It's dangerous," she warned.

"What of it?" the boy laughed.

Millie was persuaded. She grabbed hold of the ice-boat with one hand and with the other clutched the rope to which Charlie's sled was hitched up. Suddenly the boat began to go. It slid gracefully over the mass of ice, scooping up speed until its velocity threatened the young vagabonds with imminent danger.

"Hold on tightly," Charlie cheered lustily.

It was redundant advice. Millie would have done no differently. She had caught a wildcat by its blunt tail. She didn't know whether it was more dangerous to hold on or to let go. The devil and the deep blue sea had divided claim to the petrified girl's feelings. Charlie neither feared nor was he frightened. He hooted and howled and evidenced all manner of glee in the racing ice-boat which tingled his blood and led his sled a merry chase. As for Millie, her concern was all for her cousin. If she further clutched the boat, they would be tossed

around the snap of a whip, and she wondered what would become of Charlie. But if she released her hold, the force of the speed would hurl them both in a spill of fifty miles an hour. The girl trembled at the thought of the consequences. She screamed and screamed, but her cries fell on deaf ears, and an unconcerned ice-boat sped on—and on—and on—

"Don't be afraid, Millie," Charlie yelled. "Nothing's going to happen. It's just a ride."

Millie wasn't so sure. Her young relative was always taking risks. He was a daring boy. There was the time she had the measles, she remembered, when her mother and her aunt met in friendly, filial confab outside, in front of her house, to prevent his catching the ailment. But when they turned around to get Charles, where was he but sitting alongside of Millie's bed, inquiring with avid interest into the symptoms of her disease.

So Millie with nothing else to do but believe in her cousin, held on. For more than half an hour the ice-skiff gave them a frantic ride and then one of the boys on board turned about. He was genuinely impressed with the girl's trepidation, and brought the racer to a halt. When it was over, Charlie boasted bravely:

"It was fun, eh, Millie?"

Courage, that firmness of spirit which meets danger without fear, came to him as a native gift, as part of the inevitable.

Charlie loved people, literally loved people. He was always one of a group. He was the kind of a lad that other boys naturally take to. He had the spunk and the pluck of youth much older. Nothing was too hard to try or to do. He was a born leader.

His playmates hung on anxiously to his every word, as the bee to the flower. He liked friends, many of them, with whom to surround himself. He had chums at St. Mary's and as many at the Murray street school a few blocks away. Dirty or clean, if they had a human heart, they were his "brothers," and like a magnet he was drawn to their varied personalities and they to him.

His unbounded interest he gave to everything and everybody. Charlie's sociability, however, blew an ill wind and that winter he was stricken with typhoid. They were fearful, frightening, threatening days for his parents and until he had passed the crisis there was no rest in the household. His mother in her devoutness sought God's will in giving renewed life and vigor to her son. Her Christian heart was sorrowed. She prayed at the improvised altar in her bedroom and with crucifix in hand at God's dais in the cathedral. So did the sisters, who sang his cradle-song. All who loved the boy, and there were many from the laity and from the cloth, passed the Coughlin portals in hopeful entreaty for his recovery.

The first week of his illness when general malaise and loss of appetite sucked away his flesh, his mother was unable to eat in sympathetic anxiety. The nausea and step-ladder rise of fever which progressed with the disease worried her into frenzy. "My Jesus, mercy," was the unhappy woman's solacing plaint. A month passed and the little fellow writhed in pain, his frail body made incongruous by a distended stomach. Still the infectious, febrile, often fatal typhoid gripped him, though a medical hand and talent watched him closely. There was

the coma vigil which his mother could neither understand nor endure. In her faith she found her only comfort. The fifth week had passed and Charlie was still delirious. Then one night his death-like form emitted feverish mumblings; incoherent, rambling reason under a cloud.

Mother Coughlin wept softly as she bent over him, as mothers do, wilfully unknowing of contagion and caring less.

"Charlie, my boy—Charlie. What are you saying?" she whispered.

The boy was close to oblivion and in those hallucinated wanderings there must have come to him a vision. The storm had broken. From that nebulous haze between life and death, his eyes opened and he smiled.

In his tenth year there was much work to be done, if Charlie was to carry on in the prescribed course; and he set himself to the conquest of his tasks.

Hamilton was growing. In 1901, ten years since his birth and the momentous sounding of the Supreme Pontiff, more than thirty-five hundred people had been added to its population in productive employment of manufacturing and superior commercial advantages. It was the capital of Wentworth County, spread out along Burlington Bay on the western extremity of Lake Ontario, an important shipping center by rail and by water. It was assuming the imposing proportions of growing industry marked by sky-lining buildings. There was a court-house, a public library, several government buildings, and generous dottings of educational institutions to stamp progress. It was the seat of

Anglican and Roman Catholic bishoprics; and 52,-634 men, women, and children distributed their beliefs in varied faiths. Seventy miles northwest of Buffalo, Hamilton was an important link in a chain of depots on the Grand Trunk—now a portion of the Canadian National Railways—the Canadian Pacific, and the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo railroads. Then as now, Hamilton was in the midst of a populous region, the center of the celebrated Niagara fruit belt.

Charlie was a religiously-minded boy growing up in a growing city.

There was a triangle in his life, joined for his welfare under a common purpose. He talked of three interests as his "three bosses"—his "school boss," his "music boss," and his "big boss" at home. Not one would he disappoint. He knew and respected their wishes for him. He prepared himself for an examination in scholastic work and for an added summary in music. He would triumph. For a week, prior to the music trial, he practiced three hours daily. There would be no groping or fumbling this time and he would justify Sister Aurelia's teachings. And though three hours out of a short afternoon was quite a long spell for a young boy to devote to piano labors, he ungrudgingly resolved himself.

Confident of the ultimate, he went to Sister Aurelia's and there in the quiet of St. Joseph's Convent, rehearsed for her his playing ability of those compositions on which Professor J. B. Nelligan would be certain to quiz him. Sister Aurelia was confident too. But on each sleeve of his jacket, knowingly on

this child of the church, she pinned a religious medal —faith's talisman.

"Something tells me in here," the boy pointed to his heart, "that I won't fail."

"Yes, I know," the sister replied. "You must have faith."

The sister dismissed him with the promise that when he had concluded the examination, he would return first to her and report the result. A laughing boy proceeded on to the professor's residence. He played his pieces. Again something "in here" assured him. At the finish of the recital, he appealed anxiously to the supervisor:

"Please, sir, d'you think I passed?"

There is no resisting a frank, polite query spoken by honest youth. Charlie's privilege for asking an answer was doubtful, but he wanted to take back to Sister Aurelia definite word of his passing, to see her eyes twinkle.

The professor smiled, very friendly, and he said:

"Yes, my boy. You're very clever."

A perfect day was rounding out. He hurried off to the convent, running all the way, to bring cheer to Sister Aurelia with the good news. When he appeared before her, there was no holding him, and he fairly exploded:

"The professor said I'm a very clever boy."

Charlie's display of ability was pleasing to the sisters and in token of their regard, that he might have and hold something reminiscent of exultant victory, they gave him a new rosary with gold links. He went home, a youthful hero on the first leg of his journey.

Already the fathers of St. Michael's had their

eyes on the lad. Word had gone out of his promise and divinely-motivated tendencies, of his faith in the precepts of parochial teachings, of his loyalty to St. Mary's as altar and choir boy, and of his love for a religious mother.

For the next year the Coughlins received frequent visits from the Basilian fathers of the novitiate "on the hill." Father William H. Murray and Father R. T. Burke came to the mother to extol the virtues of the boy. They told her he stood out among other boys. They hinted as they talked of the future. Their veiled references to the priesthood brought palpitation to a mother's heart. Father Murray was not so cryptic in his faith of the future for this boy.

Shortly before Charlie left home to travel a hard but beautiful road, Father Murray visited the Coughlins. He played duets with the boy, who was now somewhat of a pianist, in the parlor. Picturesque parlor, the best room in the house in which to receive the priest fittingly, with its over-stuffed furniture, small, square table in the center, an upright piano in the corner and, on its walls, gilt-framed portraits of Coughlin forebears hung in portly sombreness. Charlie, framed in kilts, stood up in a photograph on the piano-top. Mrs. Coughlin sat by, her face wreathed in heavenly bliss as she watched her boy's little fingers glide over the keys in pleasing accord with Father Murray's playing. They performed only a short while. The Father beckoned Mrs. Coughlin to one side and they adjourned to the next room, beyond Charlie's hearing.

The Father whispered:

"Has the boy said anything to you about what he wants to be?"

Apprehensively, excitedly, she answered, "No."

Maternal instincts belied the statement but she waited—waited for the word from the designated man of the church.

"Well, I know," Father Murray told her. "He's going to be a priest."

Again a periodic sign post blazing the trail, in undisputed claim, to the future.

Their secret was kept from the boy when they returned to the parlor. Charlie was anxious to know what had gone on in the other room, what had been said, surmising that the talk was about him, but was told to play one more piece "like a good boy," and this he did. He was a knowing boy, however, for later his mother said that he guessed the significance and the truth of their whispered conversation.

It was May, a month before Charlie was to be graduated from St. Mary's; and what was to be done with the boy, now that he was eleven and "getting on in years"? What about his further studies? There must be no undue delay.

Digressing for a moment— When one scans the list of Irishmen and their descendants who have attained distinction and glory, there appears to be more truth than mere fantasy in the legendary tradition of the hills of Connemara. 'Tis said that when the moon goes into hiding behind the billowy shadows of this bit of Erin, the spectral banshees, witches, and leprechauns come to life to hold pagan revels in celebration of the induction of "sons with book learning" into the service of the Mother

SAINT MARY'S SEPARATE SCHOOL, HAMILTON, ONTARIO

Church or of the British Army. The legend holds these forms to be:

> "Aerial spirits, by great Jove designed
> To be on earth the guardians of Mankind."

I offer this as a pleasing interlude of the charming romanticism of the race.

Thus it is that every Irish manor blessed with an heir has a problem that takes precedence over all others—what to do with the growing boy?

Father Burke came to Mrs. Coughlin in the interest of her son's future. Five times in one day he came, to acquaint her with her boy's fated indication. Five times he pleaded with her to send Charlie to St. Michael's to round out under the influence of Basilian training an intelligence, a heart, and a will endowed by God for His service.

Mother Coughlin's mind could not sanction the absence of her boy in going to college. She who wanted him by her side always, to mother in manhood, to watch over, refused Father Murray's importunings though, in the end, she succumbed. For deep down in her heart a deeply religious nature cried out for the mystical wedlock of her son with the church; called out in delight for the holy union of her two loves.

She was torn between these two duties, two loves, maternal and religious. With her husband's approval, she went to Monsignor Mahoney, her own distant relative. To him she confessed her plight.

"They want to take Charlie away to college. What will I do?" she asked.

Before him stood a woman extraordinary; one

whose "labor, wide as earth, has its summit in Heaven"; whose daily pilgrimage to mass was after the greater glory of God; whose faith was unimpeachable.

"Oh, let him go," the monsignor advised. "He'll be back to you in a week's time."

## CHAPTER IV

*"And still they gaz'd,*
*and still the wonder grew*
*That one small head*
*could carry all he knew."*

—GOLDSMITH.

IN small, closely-knitted but legible writing, Charles Edward Coughlin signed his name to the registration blank of St. Michael's College in Father Cushing's office, which enrolled him automatically as a student of the seminary, but voluntarily as a prospective candidate for the Basilian Order. It was September, 1903. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Coughlin had traveled forty miles to Toronto with their son to deliver him personally into the safe-keeping of the Basilian fathers. The ride was short and silent. The parents were strangely happy, though it meant separation. Quite willingly, they handed over their boy to Father Cushing and as he wrote, under instructions, the necessary information about himself, his schooling, his habits, his intentions, they watched him anxiously. His eyes shone, his face was brightly flushed. When he concluded the brief sketch that was to age with countless others in regulated files, some day to be re-examined in wondering perusal, Dad Coughlin dug into his humble savings, the nest egg accumulated for just such use, and paid the tuition for his boy gladly.

The mother's eyes wandered out through the of-

fice window, over the spacious expanse in dreamy contemplation of her son's new life.

They sat around for a while in cheery talk. The parents acquainted Father Cushing with the "little things" about the boy they felt he should know; and, in turn, Father Cushing assured them of the boy's safety and sound progress. Temporarily, Charlie's thoughts were back home in Hamilton, where he left his collie, the dog that recognized him as master, whining and scratching at the parlor window—alone. Out of a clear sky, the youngster popped the irrelevant question and asked the ruling head of St. Michael's for permission to bring to college with him—his dog. Dogs were not allowed, he was told. It was against the rules. Charlie accepted the first official dictum of his away-from-home-schooling silently, obediently, gentlemanly.

As conclusion to the conference, Father Cushing said to the new student:

"Charlie, take your mother and father around the university and show them the grounds."

They took gracious leave. The boy was pleasant enough, but, somehow, he was unhappy. The thrilling expectancy of collegiate independence, of supervised individualism in an institution federated with a powerful university, was lost on the lad. There was a listlessness about him that couldn't be defined, although it was apparent. His parents felt it. They walked around in silence, noticing only casually that it was a "nice place." Neither father, mother, nor son was thinking "how well" the grounds appeared or how "fine-looking" and "happy" were the groups of students who passed them.

They wandered around aimlessly as excuse for killing time until the painful duty of leave-taking was at hand. There was yet an hour before train schedule, before Mother and Dad Coughlin would be whisked back over the rails to the little, brick cottage—alone. So they wandered down the hill from St. Michael's and around the grounds of the Methodist College and the Episcopalian campus, walking slowly, not to tax the strength of Mrs. Coughlin whose enormous vitality was not one of rosy health but of indomitable will. The hour hand crept on, and still they walked. Came time, at last, for return. They neared the incline which was to take them again "up the hill" to the college.

"Don't come any farther, Mother. Let us say good-bye here."

Mrs. Coughlin explained later that this touching interest of her boy was for her waning vigor. Maybe it was.

The loving trio stopped. They looked at each other, a brave sadness restraining their tears. They stood there in unutterable understanding. In another moment, Mrs. Coughlin would crush her boy in parting embrace, kissing him with the finest and purest of all love. In a breath, she would hurry last-minute advice to bind him to goodness for months. Charlie lifted up his eyes to his mother. They seemed to say, "Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes."

Suddenly without word or warning, the boy whirled about and dashed "up the hill" until he reached St. Michael's. There was no looking back —no retracing. He passed through the door. Stunned, the parents turned and walked away. Charlie couldn't bear to say good-bye.

St. Michael's is one of three secular institutions federated with the University of Toronto.

The University of King's College, chartered in 1827, opened its doors to students in 1843. Six years later, it changed its name to the University of Toronto, Toronto receiving its derivation from the Huron word meaning a "place of meeting." In 1853, the university was divided into two corporations and was henceforth known as the University of Toronto and the University College, distinct entities under a combined head. Thirty-four years later, there was still a further transformation and, under what is known in Canada as the Federation Act, the university became a teaching body once more with many faculties of arts and sciences. In the faculty of arts, subjects were divided between the University of Toronto and the University College, the latter institution, in effect, a State Arts College, complementary to the university's faculty of arts. Under the re-organization, denominational colleges were created, fashioned principally after the English educational system. There is Victoria College to represent the Methodist Church of Canada; Trinity College to represent the Church of England; and St. Michael's to represent the Roman Catholic Church. It is virtually a seminary with combined high school and college classes, leading to the novitiate and scholasticate of St. Basil's in advancement culminating in ordination. St. Michael's, founded by the Basilian fathers, disciples of St. Basil the Great, Bishop of Cæsarea who died in the fourth century, is one of the important buildings of the university. In this way, Charlie became a student of a Catholic institution to supplement in

his collegiate years a study of the classics at the University of Toronto.

A week later, Mrs. Coughlin wrote a letter to her boy asking him to withdraw from the college and come home to her. The boy never received the appeal. A censor, no doubt, whose intercepting hand divined the contents, destroyed the mother's letter in good faith.

Every week thereafter, for the goodly part of the first year and for the school terms that followed, Mrs. Coughlin journeyed the same forty miles from Hamilton to Toronto to see her boy and to spend a few happy hours with him. She came to be looked upon as one of the students of "St. Mike's," as the boys nicknamed the seminary, whose weekly visits marked the arrival of a package of toothsome delicacies for watery mouths to devour. The boys had plenty of good, rough, fuel-making food to quelch voracious appetites. Sweets, cakes, and home-cooked pastries were specialties for which their young hearts longed in a rugged life free from any ice-cream puffing. Charles' inner circle of friends grew terribly large as word was passed along of the weekly food dainties that came to him with his mother's visits. And Mrs. Coughlin came to be as familiar a figure as her son to Dr. Cushing. Charlie needed no bi-monthly report to keep his parents posted on his scholastic progress. His mother received weekly counsel of his brilliant advance. The great love between mother and son was a familiar story at the college. This is a man's biography, but, then, it is also the chronicle of mother-love, without which, his story might never have been written.

Charlie's "nice clothes"—the six of everything—his mother had so carefully selected for his new schooling were of little use to him when he got under way. He was not to pursue a cathedral existence at St. Michael's, but the sturdy, hardy, practical life of a Canadian institution, arising very early in the morning in the bitter cold of winter to fill the subsequent hours of toil with definite accomplishment. Durable garments, serviceable, lasting well in use, and a heavy, woolen sweater—this was St. Michael's regalia for high school classes.

They sat the boys twelve at a table in the dining-hall to ease the way for friendships. But the college was a small, intimate place where a boy got to know his classmates with little difficulty—where easy personalities, similar points of view, pleasant attitudes, and athletic interests were like pages in an open book to be read and approved. And then, too, Charles was no shy wall-flower. He made his own friends quickly.

A month after his arrival at "St. Mike's," he celebrated his twelfth birthday. His mother brought an extra assortment of goodies and his friends lionized him. Shortly after, he served as altar boy for St. Michael's Pro-Cathedral.

The boy plugged seriously at his high school work. There was adult insight behind the sober toil. For diversion, he gave himself to seasonal sports, carrying on at the college his large liking for baseball, handball, adding to the games rugby, which he was to excel in. He was a familiar figure to other young sportsmen and to the fathers who lived over again their lives with the young boys. From these Basilian teachers, who made of religion a pleasant

thing, not a burden, Charlie learned the secret of a good life. They told him to eat well, to sleep well, to study well, to play well, to pray well—all for the honor and love of God. Their dispositions and contentment, their humanness, reflected to him the truth of their teachings—seemed to "halo" them when he appeared before them.

Participation in sports was not compulsory. But all the boys made of athletics a taken-for-granted requirement among themselves. Refusal on the part of a youngster to join the games was equal to social ostracism.

There was, for instance, a place called "Little Walk," where young boys were sent for discipline of minor infractions of school rulings. The little fellows got fresh air and exercised their legs during the corrective relegation but they were barred from taking part in sports. Charlie loved his athletics too well to try his luck at breaking rules. It was much better to view "Little Walk" from a distance than to be on the "inside looking out" at classmates disporting themselves in toughening games. And Charlie was not one to incur the displeasure of the professors.

Vacation times were pleasant times for the boy. He was eager to get home to live again under the smiling gladness of a rejoicing mother. She made his rest periods as festive and comfortable as possible. She urged him to bring home a friend with him from the college, any little boy who couldn't journey easily the long distance between school and home. This the boy did. And he made his friend as happy as he was happy in the five-room cottage with his mother's fine hospitality. There would be

other friends of the neighborhood to meet his newly-made college chum; and with whom he reviewed the surroundings and routine of St. Michael's; and to join with in jolly parties.

"All the boys are my brothers," Charlie told his mother.

For one so young, it was a significant thought, beautiful and fine as it was tender.

Then one day Mrs. Coughlin arranged a real spread with special invitations for the youth of the parish, for Charlie's friends. They arrived and were enjoying themselves, but Charlie was not one of them. Mrs. Coughlin went looking for him. She climbed the stairs to his bedroom and there flung across the bed she found the boy with his head buried in the covers.

"Charlie, whatever is the matter? Come along. Your friends are waiting for you. They'll be wanting you."

Mrs. Coughlin wondered, astonished, touched by this strange sight.

"Mother," the boy turned and said, hesitantly. His face was flushed. His eyes were like lumps of fire flaming in their sockets. His mouth quivered. "Mother dear, please tell them—that—I'm not—at home to-day."

Mrs. Coughlin understood. She closed the door quietly and left her boy alone with his thoughts—feelings that crowded out pleasure, revelry, fun, companionship; thoughts that ached only for solitary communion.

Charlie returned to college with even greater determination to achieve brilliance—not to be a jack-

of-all-studies and master of none, but to thoroughly absorb all learning urged by the Fathers.

The next vacation period Charlie brought home another school friend and they were both "mothered" by Mrs. Coughlin. She arranged a trip to Ste. Anne de Beaupre for the boys in a constant desire to inspire her son with the beauty of religion.

With a boy at each hand, she journeyed to the village and famous pilgrim resort twenty miles east of Quebec. She explained to them the significance of the shrine and told of its founding in 1620 by Breton sailors in commemoration of their gratitude to Ste. Anne for their escape from imminent shipwreck. The boys were fascinated by the story. They were healthily inquisitive and plied Mrs. Coughlin with many questions. Mrs. Coughlin knew the religious legend. In 1658 a chapel was built and a miracle occasioned, she recited to them. A devout inhabitant of Beaupre who suffered from rheumatism, after placing three stones on the foundation, found himself cured. It was the first occurrence of many such instances of miraculous healings for which the Sainte was credited at the shrine. A church superseded the chapel in 1676 and two hundred years later a more magnificent church was built in divine recognition of Ste. Anne. And people brought sacred relics to the shrine. It was made a repository for numerous bandages and crutches discarded by cured cripples as proof of their healings. She called the boys' attention to the vast throngs who found refuge at the shrine.

Charlie and his friend were breathless with enthusiasm. Two flower-like girls with chastened souls, standing by, overheard the mother's narrative

to the lads and were themselves interested. They spoke to Mrs. Coughlin. These young women soon after became nuns. They entered St. Hyacinth Convent, just outside Quebec, the head house of the Precious Blood. But there at Ste. Anne's, at the shrine of miracles and unaltering faith, one of the girls, after staring intently at Charlie for some time, at last said to the mother:

"The boy with the blue eyes will be a priest. But the boy with the brown eyes—no—he will not be a priest."

Needless to say, the boy with the blue eyes was Charlie Coughlin. And his friend, who had brown eyes, and who like himself was a student of a Catholic institution, chose a life outside the church.

With renewed energy, Charlie went back to St. Michael's, after a summer's rest, to keep doggedly at his work. He was no ordinary student, complacently satisfied to meet curriculum requirements in pleasing fulfillment. He was a studious, "get ahead" boy aiming for something beyond the average ambition. He was industrious to a marked degree, far ahead of other boys, continually aspiring after achievement. Father Donovan, one of his early teachers, removed all stumbling blocks in the way of his advancement. And when the boy expressed a desire to study advanced Latin and Greek, the Basilian teachers nodded their heads in approval.

They permitted him to take these academics as extra-curriculum activities. Charlie devoted several hours a week to these arts, drinking down the tutelage in large gulps. Studying to him was a labor of love. Father Cushing, who left the "greatest imprint on the minds of the pupils"; Father McBrady;

Father Murray, who taught the lad that "he who has more must give to him who has less"; Father Burke—these Basilian fathers were silently proud of the boy's promise.

In 1907, when Charlie matriculated at St. Michael's, it was time to enter the collegiate division. He jumped directly into the second year.

## CHAPTER V

*"It is the mind that makes the man*
*and our vigour is in our immortal soul."*

—OVID.

As an undergraduate at St. Michael's, Charles was an all-round student whose oratorical ability, fluency of tongue, quick wit, and brilliance in English were matchless, seconded only by his genius in rugby. He who was Charlie, the pensive-faced lad with gracious manner and soulful eyes, was now "Chuck" Coughlin in sportive familiarity to his colleagues and the dignified Mister Coughlin to his teachers. Many student organizations marked him as an important leader and member, but to dramatic and literary societies he gave more than a willing hand and ear. Dramatics, religion, philosophy—these were his specialties in education; these were his doting delights.

He was a devotee of Shakespeare and an ardent student of the drama. Before he left St. Michael's, his associates made free and easy with the prediction that another Edwin Thomas Booth, Tommaso Salvini, or Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree was in the making. Not a few of his colleagues thought he had the potentialities of a Stuart Robson or a Sir John Toole to give to the theater a comedian or farceur of great note. He acquired not only an intimate technique of the theater in university histrionics but a great knowledge of the masterpieces of the drama. His liking of the drama was not a

theatrical liking, however, for that which was exaggerated, artificial, or tawdry in its dramatic effects, but for that which suggested vividly expressive action or gesture. He abhorred sensationalism in any form, although in later years he found himself the innocent pawn in a sensational acclaim, far beyond his wildest dreams, by a nation's millions—not as an actor behind the footlights, but as an Apostle of God behind a microphone.

He read by the hour, not skimming the superficial meaning of the written word, but disemboweling the phrases until the truth burned in his mind. Wise beyond his years, he had a cultivated mind that craved only the truth—the truth at all costs. He would know the "why" of everything. Christ said: "You shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free." In this seeking after truth, the young man sought freedom—intellectual freedom. Then he would be content. Nothing of human concern was foreign to him.

In his narrow, bare-looking, cubby-hole chamber, he paced the floor oftentimes, a young man talking to himself. In his hand was a book on logic from which he had read in substance: Ideas are false. They are false if they represent things as different from what they really are. And this, ideas sometimes do. Ideas can be false.

He moved backwards and forwards, his head tilted in pondering analysis. Not until he had examined the component parts, relating them to the whole, cutting it to the core, did he accept the premise and its proof. He not only applied his understanding of logic to the classroom, but made it a basis for all his thinking.

Somewhere Coughlin read in prescribed reading for the subject seven approximated reasons for error. And as he mulled over in his mind the fallacy of some original ideas, it came to him that with the reduction of the seven reasons for error there could be formed the basis for seven sound corrections. The logic textbook had stated that, to begin with, error exists because of a limitation of intellect; because of the dire lack of serious thought. Then, too, the confusion of ideas born of dullness of mind or negligence breeds error.

The book further stated that the domineering influence of passions or feelings prompts individuals to accept whatever pleases them—hence error—prejudices hastily formed without deep examination. If one has a faulty reasoning and too vivid an imagination, error is committed, he remembered further from the textbook. And when false information concerning facts and principles are peddled as truth, there is again error.

In his reconstruction of the textbook data, he kindled a line of thought. Coughlin had a natural propensity for scholastic philosophy.

The hours that he took in time off to stroll by himself were not at all wasted. In these moments of meditative reverie, he reduced to his own satisfaction, then, one weighty problem: "A world without religion is no world at all. The universe must be rid of paganism if right thinking is to motivate right living."

For his imaginative temperament, he sought the beauty of poetry, reading often into the lines a philosophy interpretative of his high thoughts and inner emotions. Poetry was his sweetmeat, and although

Coughlin had an excessively sweet tooth, the rationality of his intellect was never prostituted by versified sentimentality.

A young spellbinder from Oxford University, England, crossed the ocean to sway the minds of these undergraduates with the overwhelming poetical romanticism of Shelley. He lectured, too, on the poetry of John Keats, likening the literary power of his verse to Oriental richness. Percy Bysshe Shelley, the lecturer told them, was a poet of nature who utilized love as the central power and force of the world in his verse.

He concluded the talk on literature:

"Shelley and Keats, two of the youngest of the six great exponents of romanticism—the new poetry—became the literary parents of the two great Victorians, Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning."

Toronto University's English "lit." students left the classroom raving over the persuasiveness of the Englishman's talk. They were convinced that Shelley was a great poet whose lyrical truths were hymns to intellectual beauty.

That night in the dormitory, the boys revived the afternoon's session. They reviewed and accepted the lecturer's recapitulation of Browning's commentary on Shelley: "Shelley was a man of religious mind because every idea cast out by him was innerpenetrated."

E. F. McCorkell, since risen to the rank of superior at St. Basil's novitiate, watched "Chuck." Coughlin hadn't said a word. He listened to what his colleagues had to say. He held his tongue in his cheek until he deemed it wise to crash through their wrongly premised comments—"To speak a

word in due time is like apples of gold on a bed of silver."

"Well, Charlie, what will it be? Out with it. You've got a different notion," McCorkell spoke up. He was at the time satisfied with the Oxfordian's point of view as regards Shelley.

"Shelley is a pagan. That lecturer can spellbind you with all the enchanting words of the dictionary, but he left me cold. Shelley's verse is the rhyme of a heathen. He can't worship a true God and write such idolatrous stuff," Coughlin orated. He strode up and down the room, a habit he still is addicted to. His hand was outstretched in confirming gesture.

The students gaped at their colleague. Was Coughlin mad? Or was he striving for effect? Did he think he was reciting Shakespeare? But Coughlin didn't wait for their cynical dismissal. He didn't wait for their deprecatory laughter. The stares on their faces sufficiently evidenced the derogation in their minds. It was a startling declaration, but Coughlin held his ground. He continued:

"Shelley isn't ethical. And if he isn't ethical, he isn't religious. He is a romanticist, glorifying physical love in verse. His poetry is fantastic, vain, delusive—chimerical, I tell you. Take this from Shelley:

> 'Forms more real than living man
> Nurslings of immortality.'

Is that Christian? Shakespeare was a great ethical teacher. But Shelley makes prominent the superficial qualities in the youth of a nation. He is a pagan who brightens aimless fancy, inflates awe of

the unknown, and bows in eager, uncritical delight to the abundance of nature. His poetry reeks with impetuous joy and sorrow, with a breaking forth into free and instant tears and smiles. Variety, contrast, liberty, unlicensed imagination—these are the watchwords of Shelley's romanticism. He depended on his own original vision of life and gave it pagan expression. What he saw with his own eyes and felt with his own heart, not in relation to Providence—that's the stuff he wrote about. He forgot God."

"Stop your preaching, Chuck," his friends derided him.

"I think you're wrong, Charlie," McCorkell spoke up.

Coughlin took the hint and retired to a corner of the room while his colleagues continued their mutterings. For hours he sat, a "bystander" with an unshared attitude.

Many years later Father McCorkell willingly admitted his error in favor of "Chuck" Coughlin's condemnation of Shelley's poetry.

"I thought I was right then and that Charlie was wrong. Since, however, I have come to see as he saw," the superior confessed.

Coughlin's intelligence, inconceivable in an immature undergraduate, had pierced the fallacious oratory and would accept nothing but the truth. His vitriolic tongue he brought many times into play to lash to the mast any attempt to delude by misleading or illusory argument. The rudiments of scholasticism were so deeply embedded in his soul that, after diligent study of the methods and doctrines of the Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages, he mas-

tered the reconciliation of faith with reason before he stood in cap and gown on the platform of that Canadian university.

During the later years of his higher learning, Mrs. Coughlin came less frequently to St. Michael's. Her son had grown to young manhood, and in true motherly fashion she appreciated the wisdom of fewer visits, lest his colleagues think him a "mother's boy." But she telephoned frequently to appease her own heart and mind. If she heard the soft vibrancy of his voice, she was happy. She knew he was well and "getting along." One day she telephoned the college and asked to speak to "Charles Coughlin."

"I am sorry but Mister Coughlin is unable to come to the phone," the voice at the other end told her.

"And why?" she asked frantically. Her heart sank. Something had happened to her "Charlie." "Is he sick? Oh, he must be very sick if he can't come to the phone. I am his mother. And what has happened?"

"No, no, Mrs. Coughlin," she was assured. "He'll be all right. He has overstrained his eyes. They have gone bad on him. They are bandaged up now. That's why he can't come to the phone. But he will be well again soon, Mrs. Coughlin."

She was not a well woman, but the mother hurried to St. Michael's the next day to see for herself, to be near her boy, to console him. Charles started to wear glasses then, a habit which has followed him through the years when ardent labors have engulfed him. But at this time, the incident bears out the sincerity, the earnest and resolved effort he applied to the acquisition of knowledge.

FATHER COUGHLIN'S MOTHER

If no other characteristics of Coughlin stand out in the memories of those who attended St. Michael's with him, these gifts will be remembered to the longest day of his life in this world—his brilliance in English, his eloquence, and his championship at rugby.

In English seminar, there were periods set aside when students were called upon to give conferences. They were expected to prepare a talk on some assigned reading of the previous week's studies and, when singled out, to give erudite recitations. Coughlin went to class unprepared twice. But in the lexicon of this youth, there was no such word as fail. "Mister Coughlin!" His name was called. Now since it was an alphabetical arrangement, the young man figured he had two or three days more to go. Well, he arose with all the dignity of a mighty sage and, with a blank sheet of paper before him, he extemporized a dissertation that rivaled the best that could have been written after hours of careful preparation and deep concentration. He had a rare command of the language. He chose his words with infinite discretion—hand-picked plums of wisdom. His diction presupposed practiced elocution. Mister Coughlin had an uncanny appreciation of what "holds" an audience.

Would Charlie arise and address the Father: "I am unprepared, Father," and then slide into his seat ashamed, ignominiously called to account? No, indeed, not this young man. In his mind there was a stored-up fund of knowledge that he could draw on at will, from which he could shape into words a bitter denunciation or an exalting eulogy. Speaking came easily to him. What he read he digested, and

extemporaneous criticism was an endowed ability. Honeyed words flowed from his lips. His colleagues said it was a gift. But Coughlin philosophically shrugged his shoulders and soberly announced:

"In that hour it shall be given unto you what to say."

Little he knew then that years later he would repeat: *"In illa hora dabitur vobis quid diceris*—In that hour it shall be given unto you what to say—" when his spontaneity of oratory moulded a crying plea that rocked a nation stunned by a dastardly crime.

He would have made an eminent criminal lawyer with his sense of the dramatic, his clean-cut appearance, his quick wit, his keen intellect. There was a time when he thought seriously of following in the footsteps of men of jurisprudence, for legal science was attractive to him. His logical mind would have dissected the regulations evolved for the existence and protection of society and for the enforcement of harmonious order, with high devotion to the majesty and power of justice. But it was only a fleeting ambition, a little ship that passed in the night. As he lived to bring a new flock to the fold of religion and awakened understanding, behold what he might have done at the bar of law.

Then one day at the class in scholasticism, Coughlin was again unprepared. He was asked to expound on the "Beauty of God," with references to the four gospels. A discussion of this sort usually lasted twenty minutes. A student could talk longer if he wished, but no one ever did, and certainly the student must not be short of subject matter. It was compulsory that the oral recitation continue for the

full twenty minutes. To Charles' amazement he was called upon. To the greater amazement of his classmates, those to whom he had confessed his dereliction before entering the room and who knew he did not expect his turn, he arose and at once began to speak.

Now, talking on the "Beauty of God" is one thing, but talking on the subject for twenty minutes without preparation is a feat well within the realm of extreme difficulty. A glib-tongued, silver-throated orator could circle the bush for that length of time, but making the discourse relevant to the scholastic beauty of the Almighty with references to the gospels demanded more than flowery language. Young Coughlin was expected to discuss the Christian faith, revelation, and dispensation as recorded in the narrative of Christ's life and in the doctrines of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. But Charles based most of his talk on the apocryphal gospels and their deuterocanonical scriptures—snatching beatifying references from the gospel according to the Egyptians; the gospel according to the Hebrews, written by some of the followers of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites; Peter's gospel discovered in 1885 and published in 1892, popular among the Syrian Christians. He chose from the gospel according to Thomas, which is an attempt to fill the story of Jesus's infancy by a description of Him as a miracle worker from the beginning. Shrewd young man—well knowing that nobody knew much about the apocrypha and their authors and, should he slip into error, he wasn't likely to be discovered.

The pedant listened with avid interest. The stu-

dent continued uninterrupted. His spoken treatise was smooth. He was ready in the use of descriptive words. His forcefulness was summed up in simplicity. And as he discussed Africa's Green Nile rising in Abyssinia to unite with the White Nile near Khartum, and the severe belief of the Egyptians reflected in asceticism and agnosticism, he spoke with conviction, reliance, persuasion. At the very end of his recital, however, he slipped, though, at the time, no one was aware of the mistake. Young Coughlin summarized:

"And if I were to select a single text to sum up everything I have said, I should say in the words of Isaiah, the great prophet who foretold the coming of Christ and the mysteries of our redemption: 'There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness.' "

Though the quotation was correctly spoken at the time Coughlin gave it, it was a seeming contradiction of all that he had said. Father McCorkell, completing the story many years later about the young man with whom he attended both the novitiate and scholasticate, was whimsical in adding the finishing touches:

"I will say for him that he was letter perfect. At all events, if he was not, I was in no condition to find fault, nor was anyone else. We sat hypnotized. He did slip at the end. But did anyone catch it at the time? Not a soul! I can't, of course, be sure that the master failed to notice the inconsistency, but if he did notice, he certainly gave no sign. Like the rest of us, he appeared overcome by Charlie's oratory. That talk was a signal triumph for Mister Charles Coughlin."

Word was spread around of "Chuck's" agile mind,

and how he "put it over." He was singled out and pointed to as the "orator." He was heralded and acclaimed for his brilliance. It was an unheard-of thing at the college for a student silently to have acquired such an intellectual background as to enable him to toy volubly with scholasticism.

From Father "Bobby" McBrady, now gone to a finer beyond to talk in learned discussion with the greatest classical scholars of generations past, Coughlin absorbed the influence of a "gentle hero." Father McBrady was deeply concerned about the young man. They were friends in a relationship that springs from common likes. When the student was troubled, he sought the Father's counsel, unafraid to bare himself and the agonizing queries that burdened his soul. To him, Coughlin listened with respect. For as Francis Bacon wrote:

> "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."

Coughlin was philosophical at an age which sends youth over the river of doubt, sometimes to fall in perilous dishonor. So when he could find no reconciliation of ideas, knowledge, and perspective in himself, he went to Father McBrady. He felt himself purged, mentally cleansed, after an hour's consultation in a far-off corner with Father McBrady, who cared nothing about money, less about spending any for himself, and whose sole ambition was to serve his God. This was a kind of practicality that was new to the young man. This frugality of existence,

in which a small bathroom mat on a dining-room floor was a luxury, was a noble dedication.

Charles was not frivolous but he was very human. He was no living saint. It isn't expected of a young man, though his eyes are toward the priesthood, though he may choose it as a career. He is expected to live a Christian life. This Coughlin did without reservations.

"DERBIES AND ULSTERS WERE FASHIONABLE AT ST. MICHAEL'S IN 1909"
(ARROW POINTS TO CHARLES COUGHLIN)

## CHAPTER VI

*"—and probably he who never made*
*a mistake never made a discovery."*

—SAMUEL SMILES.

THE Christmas season was nearing. Coughlin was a little more than eighteen, with three semesters to go before his eager hands could hold a sheepskin in proud possession. His parents expected him home for the holidays and sent him an allowance that amply covered the railroad fare back to Hamilton. It was a large lump sum to have all at once and the young man's fingers itched to spend it. So did those of two other friends with their stipends. They decided that a juicy, planked steak with "all the fixin's" was what they needed and the trio hied themselves off to King Edward Hotel. They were not supposed to break away from college, but the eagerness of youth for a man-sized meal in sophisticated surroundings tugged at their vitals. They climbed the big fence, with no regard for rules or regulations or college authority, and let themselves drop into the lap of the world beyond college walls.

Derbies and ulsters were fashionable in 1909. Coughlin sported both to pleasing appraisal. In eighteen years he had had the ups and downs of physical weight, but at this age he boasted plenty of brawn and muscle and poundage for covering. He was no Herculean Adonis, but he had a generous share of handsomeness. Young Coughlin was good-

looking in a manly, virile sort of way. He had discarded the black bow tie of adolescence for the conservative neckerchief of manly attire. A white scarf protected his throat. He looked, then, much as he did twenty years later, though his weight was considerably less. He was not tall but fair sized. He never was to reach six feet.

The three young men seated themselves at a window-table of the hotel and with the aplomb of continentals ordered "three large steaks, and make them tender—with potatoes and vegetables—three or four vegetables." The waiter bowed himself out smilingly and knowingly.

Halfway through his slice of beef, Coughlin dropped his cutlery. A calamitous thought suddenly took life to ruin the feast.

"Say, fellows," he announced excitedly, "I'm supposed to be back at school to play the organ at benediction."

Without an answer but with astounding appreciation and alacrity, the trio paid their bill, left their anticipated banquet unfinished, and bounded out of King Edward Hotel as if it raged with fire. They cared little for appearances or for the dining-room patrons—they simply fled.

At college the runaways were being sought with a vengeance. The parade of the hunters hunting the hunted excited the student body to feverish interest.

The trio approached the college wall, stealthily reclimbed the fence and made for the coal chute, the only means of entrance without detection to the confines of the institution. The boys plunged into the dirt and darkness.

"Take it easy," one culprit warned.

"Slide along," Coughlin advised.

"We'll get it if they catch us," the other "optimistically" reminded them.

A glimmer of light penetrated the outer exit and cautiously the boys wormed through the opening into the daylight. They brushed each other's clothes and were just about to smile in smug satisfaction at their narrow escape when the prefect, his towering manhood overshadowing their comparative puniness, stood face to face with them.

"Coughlin," the prefect bellowed. "Go to the organ and play. After your playing report to me at once. I'll take care of you other two immediately."

The friends parted in wondering commiseration. Coughlin somehow moved lumbering fingers over organ notes. The worry of impending punishment injected pathos into his leisurely played adagio. When he appeared at the prefect's office, his two chums were silent companions, slumped with doom. The ruling head began at once his excoriation of their wrong. The students were scared.

"The three of you should be expelled, sent away from the institution. I think I'll dismiss you immediately," the prefect threatened them. The boys begged off. They were reduced to pulp by his frozen face. They humbly offered to expiate their wrong in any way the prefect saw fit. They would do anything, anything he said, only, they pleaded, "Please, don't expel us." Guilty minds visioned family sorrow at the ignominy of expulsion.

Coughlin's private room was taken away from him. The other offenders lost a similar privilege.

All three were quartered for the rest of the term in the dormitory with the small boys, a humiliation than which there could be no greater. The punishment, meted out in rare wisdom, was a felling blow to the youthful philosophers.

Time healed the young man's wounded dignity and, with the passing of months, the threatened expulsion became an antiquated episode.

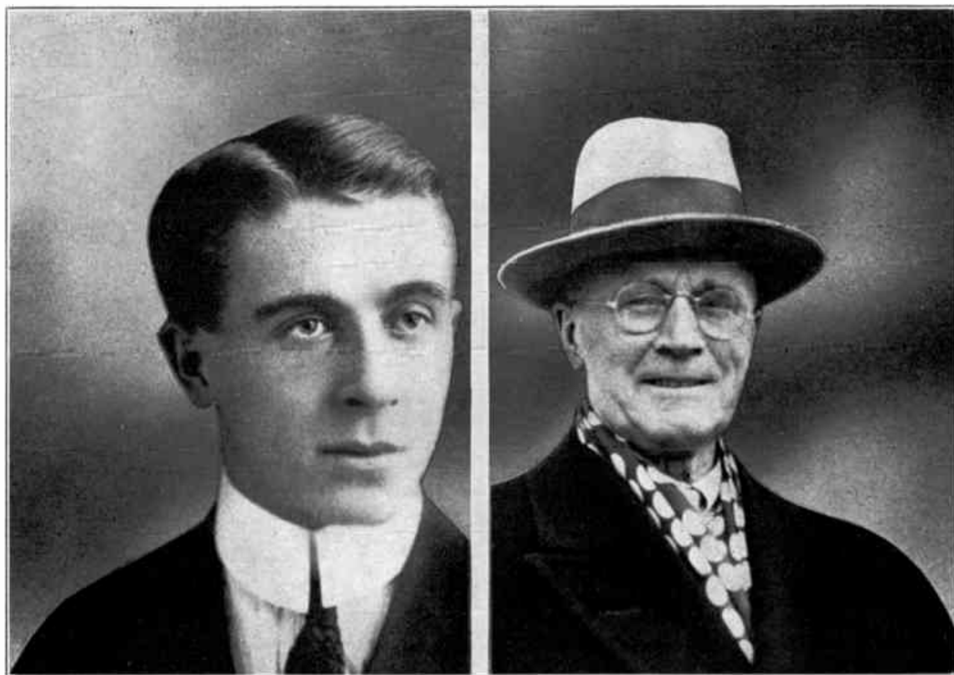
Coughlin's ruggedness came from rugby. He earned his nickname, "Chuck," on Rosedale Field where no athlete ever played more intent, fiercely fought rugby than did he. There were many cuts and bruises, indents, and lacerations, there was dizziness after a game, but then, too, there was hero-worship for a well-fought battle. There were praises for the champion. There was the coveted "St. M" which St. Michael's presented him as tangible token of his athletic prowess.

These things fill a young man's heart. They spur him on. Coughlin was human. There was classroom worship for his extemporaneous orations, for his clever witticisms. These, too, gladdened him and heightened his spirits.

Leighton Hanrahan, whom you remember was a Hamiltonian, shared Coughlin's fraternalism on the athletic field. Though they chose different paths at the crossroads, in college they were rugby "buddies."

I am going to let Hanrahan tell this story as he told it to Richard Milne, a friend of mine. It typifies Coughlin's "give and take" ability on the field of a tough contest.

"It was December eleventh, and even in the States it is not apt to be spring-like at that time of the year. Well, here it was awful. The ground was hard as



IN THE DAYS WHEN HE WAS KNOWN AS "CHUCK" COUGHLIN

THOMAS J. COUGHLIN—PROUD FATHER OF HIS FAMOUS SON

iron, corrugated iron at that. On the very first play of the game, Charlie and one of the Alerts came together like trains in a collision and Charlie's eye swelled till it almost popped out of his head. What a day it was.

"Charlie was playing center scrimmage—snap. As I say, on the very first play he was hit hard. And he wasn't the only one who was hit hard. It was the bruisingest game ever played in Canada. Everybody got hurt. You couldn't carry the players off the field. We had only one substitute for the whole team. Hurt or not, we had to play the game through—through to the very end. Charlie stuck to the last, although he was hit so hard he switched sides without knowing it, until someone grabbed him and pulled him back where he belonged. But he fought, injuries and all."

A game like that, however, was insufficient to divorce him from rugby. More than ever, he resolved to play it for all it was worth. Jack Spratt and Walter "Dutch" Gonter, the latter now Father Gonter of Fredonia, New York, two of Coughlin's friends who later joined him in teaching positions in Texas, were in that game with him; and they, too, were badly injured.

"It's all in the game," Coughlin laughed when Gonter told him what had happened—how he had switched sides and began fighting his own colleagues viciously.

Before they finished with rugby, they emerged young champions.

There was another game, in which Coughlin sustained a torn tendon and was sent to the hospital. He was restless. In a week another match was

scheduled. He knew his parents planned to attend the match. He realized how worried his mother would be if she missed him from the ranks. Coughlin sneaked out of the hospital and took a seat at the sidelines, his torn tendon bandaged, but his eyes fastened on the plays. He was an anxious-looking substitute waiting impatiently to get into action.

The hard knocks in football make a young man "bumpy." When Coughlin was older he valued these rugby blows which knocked him out and then demanded a rebound. They made him so "bumpy" that he had to fight back. Later he was to learn that fighting back is also part of life's game.

## CHAPTER VII

*"Who that well his warke beginneth,*
*The rather a good ende he winneth."*

—JOHN GOWER.

BY Father Du Mouschelle and Father Cushing, who frequently enunciated the principles of social justice, Coughlin was introduced to the teachings of the "Nestor of the human race"—Pope Leo XIII.

The deciding year was upon him. Soon his college days would be over and he would be a man, independent of action, pushed over the threshold into a world of conflict and machinized industry—free to "do something." A recurring voice haunted him. It doesn't matter how strongly our mind is directed to a chosen field, when the actual time arrives for selection, there is, always, a hair-line wavering in the weighing of comparisons.

Coughlin's every inclination, every tendency nourished in a character that was sound, solid, truthful, and wholesome, was for the priesthood. The good life in religion bound him to the church. But his desire to be of utmost service to mankind, as young men of scholastic bend are wont to dream, went afield for a brief spell. And only in transitional passing, he harkened to the mandates of the law as a career. To champion the cause of the oppressed, the misunderstood, the unfortunate, the "underdog"—though the priesthood afforded him in the future an

opportunity he never imagined possible—to plead for those unable to plead for themselves seemed a worth-while, active, fruitful endeavor. He was fine, legal material. Of this there is no doubt.

But then the Basilian fathers awakened his thirst for greater knowledge, his inquiring mind, and intellectual curiosity with Pope Leo's Rerum Novarum. Coughlin was excited to learn that the pontiff had promulgated this spirited manifesto, this defensive encyclical for the working classes, five months subsequent to his own birthday in the year of his birth. It fired his blood. He didn't know why he felt as he did, but he was enraptured. He was familiar with St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of the scholastic schoolmen, but Pope Leo's Vatican letters, he discovered, inculcated not only the study of philosophy but the works of Aquinas.

Coughlin had a new absorption, with "merit that wins the soul." He ravished the pages of the written life of Pope Leo, born Gioachinno Pecci on March 2, 1810, at Carpineto in the States of the Church, the son of Count Ludovicio and Anna Prosperi, who claimed descent from Cola di Rienzi, "the last of the Roman tribunes." The young philosopher traced the pontiff's Jesuit teachings in early years, following his story of ordination into the priesthood in 1837, through to the culminating solemn coronation as Pope Leo XIII in the Sistine Chapel on March 3, 1877, sixty-seven years and one day after his birth.

With even greater avidity he digested and devoured the concepts of Rerum Novarum. He was stunned by the striking simplicity with which the Workingmen's Pope condemned socialism, communism, and nihilism, at the same time championing the

cause of the workers. He confided to the Basilian fathers the decision of his mind. If the church considered him a proper candidate, he would study for the priesthood at St. Basil's at the conclusion of his university study of the classics, he told them. The fathers were warmly pleased. They sensed that the encyclical would give new life to Coughlin whose mind was discriminating, brilliant, philosophically sound.

Before he received his Bachelor of Arts degree from St. Michael's College of the Toronto University Coughlin fully grasped the elucidated principles of the Pontiff's letter on "The Condition of the Working Classes," specifically sent out from the Vatican "To Our Venerable Brethren, All Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic World in Grace and Communion with the Apostolic See," who as missionaries to Catholic mankind were to spread its scholarly gospel. This comprehensive study was to be the means of Coughlin's unprecedented renown.

In the quiet of his dormitory study, the student read. The seed was sown—a fertilized and ripened ovule to germinate with maturity. He need have gone no further than the first paragraph of the Pope's enunciation for in those few lines were succinctly compressed the far-reaching evils which threatened civilization with abysmal doom.

The encyclical began:

> "That the spirit of revolutionary change which has long been disturbing the nations of the world, should have passed beyond the sphere of politics and made its influ-

> ence felt in the cognate sphere of economics is not surprising. The elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable, in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvellous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses; in the increased self-reliance and closer mutual combination of the working classes; as also, finally, in the prevailing degeneracy. The momentous gravity of the state of things now obtaining fills every mind with painful apprehension; wise men are discussing it; practical men are proposing schemes; popular meetings; legislatures, and rulers of the nations are all busied with it—and actually there is no question which has taken a deeper hold on the public mind."

Under such a wordly chaos Charles Edward Coughlin was born. Close to forty years later he was to take official and intellectual cognizance that the exigencies propounded in the holy brilliance of Pope Leo for a tottering world were the festering sores of a disgruntled nation illegitimately bred by a twentieth century mammon god. Then was to recur to his wide-awake mind the prophesied truth of the supreme head of the Roman Catholic faith—that what the pope hoped for, a priest could do.

As a young man soon to join the ranks of dignified alumni, Coughlin was unalterably impressed, fer-

vently susceptible to the Pope's urgings "to arouse in others, charity, the mistress and queen of virtues" and to imprint "upon the high-placed as well as the lowly, the Gospel doctrines of Christian life." He marveled at the co-operative intercession of the Church in the mundane affairs of man and at her discernment in apprehending facts and approximating the ultimate.

Coughlin sought out a full-length portrait of Pope Leo and studied it, literally by the hour. He saw a man, tall, thin, large-framed, with bright eyes, high forehead, prominent nose, wide mouth, smiling countenance—a veined face of alabastered whiteness.

Commencement exercises were not far distant and as president of his class, Coughlin was responsible for the arrangements of senior festivities. Social preliminaries which exalt undergraduates had to be planned so that those receiving degrees to take up more earthly abode in competitive employment, might enjoy their "last fling" in a carnival of merry-making. Coughlin was unanimously named valedictorian, an outstanding honor for an honor student, in consummate sanctioning of his brilliance.

As major domo, Coughlin spent a last hectic week as an undergraduate. It was a fine finish to his year as supernumerary to the teaching staff, a student position which shouldered him not only with the responsibility of a member of the staff, but with authority; an appointment which placed him at the head table and which brought closer relationships with the teachers.

Under a blaze of glory and a tribute by T. Murray Mulligan (later to become King's Counsel in the Sudbury district of Ontario), written for the "To-

rontonensis," the year book of the graduating class of Toronto University, Coughlin left his university days behind him.

He carried home to Hamilton under his arm one sentence in a book that tied together all his years of schooling at St. Michael's—a prophecy in itself and a gateway to his future.

It said:

"Coughlin held the unique distinction of being a member of three championship teams—the handball, the junior city Rugby champions and the junior Canadian Rugby champions. He is one of the outstanding students of the college academically, as well as in athletics, and he is bound to make his mark."

Bound to make his mark——

## CHAPTER VIII

*"Set me free from evil passions, and cleanse my heart of all inordinate affections, that, being inwardly cured and thoroughly purified, I may be fit to love, courageous to suffer, steady to persevere."*

THOMAS À KEMPIS.

A BRIEF vacation in Hamilton with solicitous friends and believing parents, fond partings of "fare you well," sincere wishes, happy tears, and Coughlin moved back to Toronto to St. Basil's "on the hill," to submissively bend himself to the arduous tasks of a novice in the study of the priesthood. The novitiate was a three and a half story, red, brick building of formal design, more austere in construction than St. Michael's. Triangular encasements of attic chambers made a framework for the sloping roof. At its peak was a cross, the ensign of Christianity; at the middle was a belfry. St. Basil's was a many-windowed house. Over the façade of a projected entrance, two stories below, another chosen symbol stood erect, to welcome those offering themselves in lifelong service.

For the next few years Coughlin's willingness to humble himself before God was tested by religious labors of "firm faith, devout hope and sincere charity"; by tiresome and tedious menial toil that must not be complained of. He forfeited human comfort for that which was divine, and the sophisticated fash-

ion of dress for the stark simplicity of a cassock. He revealed to his superiors his depth of patience, obedience, endurance, and will.

For the first year a novice is committed to nothing. He simply obeys the rules of his novitiate with unquestioning and willing submission. In that year he learns the disciplinary lesson of doing grueling work. Coughlin served the routine of St. Basil's and though it was the inviolable course adhered to by all novices, I think it might be interesting to know the full day he rounded out in Basilian training as early foundation for his inexhaustible and untiring devotion to work in maturity.

He arose at half past five, breaking ice in winter to wash. Meditation was at ten minutes of six, continuing to half past six. For the next half hour there was holy mass. He ate his breakfast at seven. Divine office, the daily service of the breviary, was at eight. Coughlin had manual labor at nine which sometimes entailed the scrubbing of floors. There was class at ten, study at eleven, and spiritual examen at quarter of twelve. He ate his dinner at noon and until half past one enjoyed some form of recreation —sports, discussion with other novices, or personal reading of one sort or another. At half past one, divine office was repeated. Manual labor was carried on again at three, this time farming or work in the garden. Class was held again at four and lasted an hour. The next half-hour of the afternoon was devoted to study, after which there was meditation until six. Supper was eaten at six. After supper one of the novices walked up and down, relating the life of the Saint of the day. At seven-thirty novices held

spiritual-reading and night prayer. They studied until nine.

Then to bed for sweet sleep induced by long hours of concentration and toil to arise again at half past five in physical fitness for similar routine in a singleness of purpose.

Under penalty of repetition of the first year's work, a novice was not permitted to go home at any time during this period. For that first year, he must devote himself seduously to his tasks with an unbroken absorption. It was a hard rule, sometimes.

Coughlin had been at St. Basil's several months when word reached him that his mother was seriously ill and not expected to live. The young man sought out his superior and, with tears in his eyes, begged leave to go home, if only for a few hours.

It was a delicate situation for the Basilian fathers. They knew the beautiful love between mother and son. It was bitter hardness to refuse him permission to go to his dying mother. Coughlin's face was of ghost-like pallor and worry had lined his eyes, as he pleaded for permission. At last, the fathers told him to go, with the proviso that he must return that night by midnight. If not, he would be obliged to begin his year all over again.

Though only forty miles distant to Hamilton, it was a heart-breaking train ride—endless, endless—as he sat on a plush seat, his face cupped in his hand, staring through the window into space. Bitter moments of despair. An irremediable sorrow. A consciousness of tragedy.

When Coughlin reached his mother, she was unconscious. In the next room candles flickered like "the shadow of a shade." Unashamedly, unre-

strained tears streaming down his cheeks, he knelt in prayer, as the middle-aged and sober-miened nuns had knelt in prayer at his birth, at his mother's bedside.

He prayed. "The gradual dusky veil" of death hung over his mother's death-bed. His soft vibrancy of voice penetrated the haze. In her unconsciousness Mrs. Coughlin remembered that voice. She opened her eyes. She saw his face hazily. Lying there so still, she smiled faintly.

"Charlie," she whispered.

Though the last sacrament had been prepared for the woman, in faith, a miracle was wrought. Coughlin remained by his mother's bedside for quite a while—until it was evident that the crisis was past and that she would live. Then Mrs. Coughlin told her son to hurry back to "the hill."

Coughlin returned to St. Basil's by midnight. Several times the fathers granted him permission to visit his mother.

The priest-to-be lived in a sky-light room at St. Basil's, cheerless as it was bare. The furniture, what little there was of it, had a broken and bent look to it. It was a poverty-stricken chamber. Whatever consolation the novices were to have must come from within, in keeping with the faith. One chair in particular, which had begun to fall apart, was nailed into compactness by a piece of wood across its back.

As a very special favor, and only once, Mrs. Coughlin was allowed to see the room in which her son slept.

She took one look at the broken-back chair and she almost wept. She had tried so hard all her life

to rear her son in reasonable comfort and here he was living in dire poverty. Coughlin sensed the cause of his mother's alarm and laughed.

"This is nothing, Mother," he said. "You should see the other rooms."

Coughlin enjoyed the life he was living. It was simple and hard and rigorous, but it was the life he wanted to live. He was experiencing concretely the self-denial that he had admired in the Basilian teachers at St. Michael's.

The varying tasks of manual labor, as I have said, took Coughlin into the fields. This day he and Paul Costello, then a novice, now the rector of the Cathedral of Peterboro, were assigned to plowing the farm land from which the religious community gathered its vegetables. The plow was horse-powered. At the start of the task, Coughlin rode the horse and Costello sat at the handles. The pair at work scratched the ground slightly. Try as hard as they might, they could not make the plow cleave through the ground, as a rudder pushes through water in sailing.

"Bear down harder," Coughlin sang out.

Costello bore down. Still the result was little more than nothing. They passed the blame for the unsatisfactory progress one to the other, swapping positions. Neither was sure about the handling of a plow or what farming was all about. They had not been patterned for farmers.

Finally they discovered that the part of the plow that actually turns up the earth and makes the furrows, was missing from the implement. If their back-breaking toil availed no tangible progress, it afforded the novices considerable amusement.

In retelling the incident, years later, Coughlin chuckled with the confession:

"As I remember it, it took us two and a half days to plow two and a half acres."

The out-of-door labor hardened their muscles and tanned their skins. Coughlin and Costello many times tilled the soil together. They next received an assignment to hoe the field. They dug and cut with the long-handled, thin, flat-bladed implement until they perspired profusely and ached all over. The job was finished. They waited for the father to inspect their land-cultivation. He said:

"You have done it all wrong."

The novices side-glanced at each other, but without complaint yielded to the father's observation. They hoed the dirt back to begin again the spade husbandry of the field, preparing for the planting of onions. When their work was approved, Coughlin and Costello lined the furrows with onion bulbs. It was long, temper-testing farming. The superior returned again for inspection. The young men watched him wearily reach his hand into the ground and yank out a few of the onions they had planted.

"This is wrong, boys," he said. "You have planted the onions upside down."

What a test of their submission and pleasant yielding! Coughlin and Costello got down on their hands and knees once more, withdrew from the soil all the onions they had sown and laboriously replanted each one in the specified way of their instruction.

Coughlin and Costello were not alone in these trials. Thomas O'Rourke, another novice, who is now Father O'Rourke of Assumption College, Sand-

ST. BASIL'S NOVITIATE

wich, Ontario, where later as a priest, Coughlin was to teach, had his troubles, sifting ashes while wearing his cassock. He, too, was told he had sifted the ashes in the wrong way and was obliged to re-do the task. The sifting of the ashes was preliminary to the building of steps of ashes down to the valley below, which at completion was negatively appraised and had to be re-done.

These labors gave novices ample opportunity to think twice before taking the final steps into the priesthood. The tasks not only qualified their submission to ordained authority but characterized their patience and obedience. If worldly pleasures and leisurely comforts were more alluring than the discomforts enjoyed in the honor of God, the novice soon realized his unsuitability to a priest's calling. It is not head-strong emotion which sends him into God's service, but a gradual resolve. Coughlin had at least four years in which to decide conclusively the earlier feelings of his mind and heart.

The novitiate and scholasticate of priesthood preparation bore no such definite line of demarcation in the days he attended St. Basil's Novitiate as is held to-day. To the layman it is a distinction, unnecessary of detailed account. Suffice it to say that in the first year the novice unequivocally obeys; in his scholasticate, he continues to obey ordained authority, but of his own volition makes yearly promises. In these last three years, he is not asked to make a single promise.

During his scholasticate, Coughlin was sent to Waco, Texas, to St. Basil's College there, to teach and continue his studies. Jack Spratt and Walter Gonter were transferred to the Texan Basilian com-

munity with Coughlin. They remained in the American institution from January to June of 1914, a period of a little more than six months.

Coughlin said he and his friends went to St. Basil's in Texas "to play baseball—and to teach."

Waco, a city of east central Texas, is on the Brazos River. Its history goes back to the Redskins who called themselves the Huaco tribe, a subtribe of the Wichitas. Because of the abundant springs and the natural protection afforded from inclement elements, the Indians selected the site and pitched their wigwams in encampment. They named their reservation "Huaco," which later the whites corrupted to Waco. It was the seat of Baylor University, principally, and several other educational institutions. Baylor was and still is quite a university. St. Basil's, a small Catholic college, was its competitor at baseball. They were rivals on the diamond, pitting the man-power of each institution against each other in fiercely fought contests. Baylor continues to flourish, but all that remains of St. Basil's is a deserted, red, brick building and a lonesome-looking row of eight trees on a weeded campus. The Lone Star state gave Coughlin his first glimpse of America in all its magnitude.

Now the years at the Toronto Basilian community had worn Coughlin down to a shadow, literally down to the bone. Gone was all his fleshiness. His muscles, only, remained. But at the end of his stay in the Texan college, he had regained much of his weight. Greater freedom added greater poundage.

As St. Basil's was a small institution, its baseball team came pretty near to being its faculty. Many of its teachers, young men still studying for the

priesthood, composed the diamond nine. At Waco, Coughlin enjoyed not only his first teaching experience, but he also learned to shoot. He hunted rabbits and other small game with the boys of his classes, using a .22 rifle which the students taught him how to handle. The idea of a "Little Walk" punishment for misbehaving boys, a relic of his early schooling at St. Michael's, Coughlin transplanted to the Texan College. Under the shade of the eight trees, effective discipline worked wonders, playing on the boy's normal love of sports. For six months Coughlin taught, studied, and, when the season opened, played baseball.

Year after year, St. Basil's had suffered defeat at the hands of Baylor athletes. There was little that could be done about it. It was traditional victory. But now that St. Basil's had added three Basilians from Toronto, it was a different story. An unbeatable, combined man-power had been added to the baseball team. St. Basil boys played "at" the game. There was no idea of "downing" the invincible Baylorites. In these days Texan collegiates were baseball-conscious.

This game, the first of the season and the first to be played by the three "outsiders," was the most thrilling athletic experience of Coughlin's stay at Waco. The game was "ballyhooed" by both institutions. The student bodies of both institutions attended *en masse*. Coughlin, Spratt, and Gonter took their places. Spratt pitched, Gonter caught, and Coughlin played second base. I am going to let Father Coughlin tell the story as he told it in reminiscence.

"That was Jack Spratt's best year pitching, I

think. And it was his perfect day. The Baylor men went to the plate and he mowed them down, struck them out, one after another, with unfailing marksmanship. The few who did get to first base didn't often get to second. Middling fielders caught everything. There wasn't a bobble. Weak batters got hits. Jack Spratt himself knocked in two runs. I remember 'Dutch' Gonter threw to me at second base to catch a runner trying to steal. Any other day that throw would have gone into the outfield—it was too high. But I jumped, my arm stretched as high as I could stretch it. My arm swooped down and caught the runner. We were supermen that day. We had no right to be playing the way we were. Nothing went wrong."

The upshot of the game was a victory for St. Basil. They outwitted Baylor in a two to one score. The Baylor boys were furious. The tradition was upset. The athletic cart had been dumped and the university nine rioted in rebellion, their jealousy fanned into rage by wild Baylor fans. The Basilian team and student body took it "on the lamb." They started running for their own campus, a few steps only ahead of the mob.

That June, Coughlin returned to Toronto to renew his life at St. Basil's. The following August in the epochal year of 1914, European nations declared war in bitter bloodshed of their individual rights.

As he was too young to be ordained—he was not yet twenty-three—Coughlin continued for another year his study of philosophy and theology. But for a few visits home with his parents in Hamilton, he remained at Toronto until his ordination two years later.

Three months before he was ordained a priest, Coughlin, as "Reverend Charles E. Coughlin," a deacon appointed by the Basilian fathers, preached a sermon at St. Basil's, in the seminary chapel. Twice he preached as a deacon. It is not a unique distinction, but considered a rare privilege. McCorkell enjoyed a similar privilege with Coughlin. They were the only two to do so. Deacons in modern life do not go about preaching publicly. They are subordinate officers of varying functions in Christian churches. But in these days Coughlin had already passed through the sub-diaconate, the diaconate, and was now awaiting ordination. And so as a deacon he preached the Easter Sunday sermon at St. Basil's. It was April, 1916.

A Basilian father, one of the many "gentle" men who were interested in Coughlin, knew of his glorious love for his parents. He visited Mrs. Coughlin in Hamilton and confided to her her son's approaching honor. He invited her "to come and hear him" at St. Basil's on Easter Sunday, but cautioned her against making her or Mr. Coughlin's presence in the church known to the young man. Dad and Mrs. Coughlin traveled to Toronto. They slipped into the back of St. Basil's and inconspicuously seated themselves. Coughlin preached a fine sermon. His mother felt through the years that he never preached a finer one. As they left the church, a priest stopped the parents and said:

"He will do great things, but he never will be egotistically proud."

Not until long afterward did Mrs. Coughlin tell her son that his parents had heard him speak from St. Basil's pulpit. The parents had slipped in and

out that Easter Sunday and Coughlin had never seen them.

A week later, while Coughlin was "at home" in Hamilton, Monsignor Mahoney came to him and told him that on the following Sunday he was to preach at St. Mary's. Coughlin's knees trembled. He trembled. It wasn't fear. It was simply the feeling that in his home town, before all whom he knew and had grown up with, he would have to reveal the fruits of his training. Then, too, he knew his parents would be there in the congregation, listening attentively to his every word. Now at St. Basil's he was not nervous, nor had the impressiveness of an Easter Sunday sermon frightened him. But at St. Mary's, 'mid the magnificence of a cathedral, before a congregation of friends, he dreaded the ordeal. He felt he was pouring his words into "the lion's mouth." Coughlin, however, failed neither the critical lovingness of his mother and father, nor the interest of his friends.

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## CHAPTER IX

*"For many are called,*
*but few are chosen."*

—St. Matthew.

On June 29, 1916, at St. Basil's Church in Toronto, Charles Edward Coughlin was admitted to the priesthood. He was twenty-four years, eight months, and four days of age. The next day, at St. Joseph's Convent in Hamilton, Father Charles Edward Coughlin celebrated his first mass—a private mass for the nuns who prayed for him at birth and schooled him in Catholic precepts, in fulfillment of their hope and his boyhood promise. The following Sunday, at St. Mary's Cathedral, where he was christened and confirmed, he celebrated his first public mass.

His parents, relatives, and friends journeyed from Hamilton to St. Basil's to witness the ceremonies of his ordination. He was one of three ordained that day. The others were E. J. McCorkell and Thomas P. O'Rourke. Bishop N. McNeil, the present archbishop of Toronto, officiated at the ordination. As a candidate to receive the priesthood, Coughlin was summoned by name from his place in the church. He answered, "Adsum." Vested in amice, alb, girdle, stole, and maniple with folded chasuble on his left arm and a candle in his right hand, he went forward with his two friends, McCorkell and O'Rourke, similarly vested, to kneel around Bishop

McNeil, who inquired of the archdeacon representing the Church, as it were, into the worthiness of the three candidates for admission. The archdeacon's testimony was the testimony of fitness given in ancient times. Then Bishop McNeil charged the congregation, soliciting from them, as "the Fathers decreed that the people also should be consulted," any information derogatory or to the prejudice of the three young men. Coughlin, McCorkell, and O'Rourke were then instructed as to the duties of their new office. Bishop McNeil knelt down before the altar; the "ordinandi" prostrated themselves on the carpet. The Litany of the Saints was chanted.

Upon arising, Coughlin, McCorkell, and O'Rourke stepped forward, and knelt before Bishop McNeil while he laid both hands on the heads of each of them in silence. The attending priests, those of St. Basil's Novitiate, repeated the imposition of hands on the heads of the candidates. Then Bishop McNeil and the priest extended their right hands and while so doing, the bishop alone recited a prayer —an invitation to all to pray to God for a blessing on Coughlin, McCorkell, and O'Rourke.

Following a further supplication, Bishop McNeil crossed the stole over the breasts of each of the three candidates, vesting Coughlin, McCorkell, and O'Rourke with the chasuble, arranging it to hang down in front, but to be folded behind. God's blessing was then invoked for the newly-ordained, and the bishop intoned "Veni Creator." While the choir sang the hymn to the Holy Ghost:

"Veni, Creator Spiritus, Mentes tuorum visitas,
Imple superna gratia, Quae tu creasti pectora—"

Bishop McNeil anointed Father Coughlin's hands with the oils of catechumens, as he did the hands of McCorkell and O'Rourke.

A chalice containing wine and water, with a paten and a host upon it, was handed to each of the three men. At the completion of the offertory of the Mass, the bishop seated himself before the middle of the altar, and each of the ordained made an offering to him of a lighted candle. The newly ordained Father Coughlin, Father McCorkell, and Father O'Rourke repeated the Mass, and all said the words of consecration simultaneously. At the conclusion of the recital of the Apostles' Creed by the three newly ordained, Bishop McNeil, laying his hands upon each of them, said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sin you shall forgive——"

With the folding of the chasuble, Father Coughlin made the promise of obedience; having received the "kiss of peace," he returned to his place in the church.

His mother wept softly throughout the ceremonies, as mothers are wont to do out of happiness. When the ordination was over, one of the officiating priests brought Father Coughlin over to where his parents were seated. Not singly, but placing both their heads together, he blessed his mother and father at the same time, as they knelt before him.

Joyously the Coughlins returned to Hamilton together with their son—a priest. Thirteen years before they had journeyed from Hamilton when the eyes of their boy were turned to the priesthood. In 1916 he had reached his goal—achieved his ambition.

That night in the small chapel of St. Joseph's

Convent, several nuns worked with feverish joy to decorate their place of worship fittingly for the morrow when Father Coughlin was to celebrate mass for them. They placed roses in the window. One happy sister stayed up until early morning hours beautifying the altar in a labor of religious satisfaction for the newly ordained priest. The next morning, the boy that they had schooled, now grown to manhood, officiated at their service.

High mass from the high altar of St. Mary's Cathedral came the following Sunday. The church was thronged with people, of the laity and of the cloth. Church dignitaries came to do the young priest honor. Monsignor Mahoney, who urged his relative to send the boy to "St. Michael's—he'll come back to you in a week's time," was present also. As were Mother and Dad Coughlin, thankful parents, to witness their son in mystical wedlock with God. Though they were first to receive his blessing, they felt thrice blessed by the Trinity to Whose service their son's life was dedicated.

## CHAPTER X

*"And gladly wolde he lerne,*
*and gladly teche."*

—GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

THAT fall, Father Coughlin was commissioned to teach English, history, and Greek at Assumption College, in Sandwich, a town of less than two thousand inhabitants, and a stone's throw from Windsor, Ontario, on the Detroit River, opposite the city of Detroit, Michigan, where not long afterwards he was to stamp himself on the national consciousness of a people and become one of the "two most conspicuous Roman Catholic priests in the United States." It was his first assignment since his ordination. He remained as a teacher at the Catholic college for seven years, leaving, when he moved on in his career, a trail of achievements, and taking with him the memory of happy years—"whose yesterdays looked backward with a smile."

A young man of twenty-five, he was *"mens sana in corpore sano"*—his healthy mind in a healthy body instantly winning favor from the youngsters he taught and for whose character building he was responsible. In these days, Father Coughlin was an individualist, conducting his classes with rare endearing personality. He took groups of students on excursions to "the big city," Detroit. He purchased from his own meager income suits of clothing for those boys who needed added apparel. He coached

the "left-overs" of the athletes, after the varsity football team had taken the cream of the players and whipped them into a gridiron eleven of winning material. He taught them the meaning of service to the college and loyalty to each other in unusual body-building methods. In the classroom he was considered a "great scout." As was his habit, he strode up and down the room, hardly ever sitting behind a teacher's desk in the customary procedure, that he might read their minds from their faces. In his drama classes, he declaimed from Macbeth with the gestures and voice of a Richard Mansfield.

"Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!'
Macbeth doth murder sleep! 'the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds,—' "

Macbeth in a cassock sweeping earnest students into frenzied interest of the great litterateur! It was a colorful presentation of Shakespeare which re-echoed loudly in their growing alertness. And, as he dramatized the world's classic, he dramatized religion.

It was a novel way of teaching Shakespeare and the boys developed immeasurable appreciation. For there was talent in his voice as he recited.

Father Coughlin had been teaching for a few months when one of the young men, who studied under him and was about to be ordained, asked him to preach the sermon. The ordination was to be held halfway between Sandwich and Hamilton, at Chatham, the county-seat of Kent County on the Thames River and the seat of the United States con-

FATHER COUGHLIN, HIS MOTHER AND FATHER

sulate. As it was near home, he decided upon a visit to his parents. He seized every available opportunity to return to Hamilton for a happy family reunion. At the conclusion of the ordination services, Father Coughlin telephoned his Superior for permission to continue on to his home. But the Father refused.

"No," he said, after a moment's hesitation. "I think it would be better if you returned to the college."

"But, Father, I am halfway to Hamilton now. I can be back by to-morrow night," Father Coughlin explained.

Still the Superior was adamant, and urged the subordinate to return immediately.

"Very well, Father, I'll return to the college at once." The young priest was both pleasant and subservient.

But the Superior melted.

"Well, all right; go ahead. Go on up to Hamilton, but be sure you are back at the college to-morrow night."

Since it was to be a week-end visit, Father Coughlin anticipated spending Saturday evening and the greater part of Sunday with his folks. Late that afternoon, the Coughlins were surprised when their son walked in on them unexpectedly. Though a younger generation clamors for happiness in the supposed blooming fertility of alien fields, blindly overlooking their "backyard contentment," this young priest considered there was "no place like home." If he could help it, he was never far away from his parents. They shared his satisfactions and disappointments, his contemplations and his hopes. He

opened himself to them as very few children do—keeping nothing from them.

Father, mother, and son talked way into the night.

"You know, Mother, it is extremely difficult for me to come to see you. It would be much easier for you and Dad to come to see me," he told them.

Mrs. Coughlin's eyes widened with wonder. What was her son leading up to? Since the Coughlins had no inkling of the meaning of their son's intimation, they allowed the conversation to lull until he made himself more explicit. Then suddenly he said:

"I'll tell you what, Dad. To-morrow morning you resign your job. Sell the house or rent it. You and Mother come to Sandwich to live. We can get a house there and then we'll be together. It will make it easy for us to see each other often—at lunch, after my classes, and again in the evenings, perhaps."

It was such an unlooked for declaration that Mr. and Mrs. Coughlin were amazed; yet, behind the thought they realized how his loneliness of heart sought their companionship — a companionship which, in itself, is a glorious story. It was war-time. Abroad allegedly civilized nations were embroiled in bloody human hatred; clawing each other's throats and bayonetting each other's bodies in a mad insanity of misunderstanding. Dad Coughlin, as chief examiner of steel for the Imperial Munition Board, had a job of obvious importance and was doing his "bit." But the importance of his position paled into insignificance with the concern for his son's welfare.

"Maybe you can be transferred to Windsor, Dad.

What do you say? Will you try?" the priest urged.

Now Father Coughlin had no idea that he would remain in the Essex County town for as many years as he did. But even if it were to be only a temporary post of short duration, he craved his parents' nearness. The next morning, having slept on the idea, the three talked the situation over again. After morning mass, they re-discussed the plan, Father Coughlin sticking to his original contention. Then they went to the Royal Connaught for lunch. They talked about it further over the table. Finally, with the promise from his parents tucked away in his thoughts that as soon as their affairs were satisfactorily arranged, they would follow, Father Coughlin boarded the four-thirty train for Windsor. Two weeks later, the Coughlins had disposed of the red-brick cottage and were journeying with all its furnishings to Sandwich to set up housekeeping for themselves and their boy. From that day on, they never were far from each other.

Dad Coughlin found a position in Windsor, supervising labor in steel construction, which employment he kept for several years after the war.

They moved into a comfortable house on Campbell avenue in Sandwich, conveniently near the college. When some of the young priest's students lunched with him at his mother's house, they cut across the fields rather than walk around the prescribed paving, and were at her well-larded table in a jiffy. Other priests, teaching companions, made use of the field in like manner and for the same purpose. And all who came were handsomely fed. There was a home-baked delicacy, cake or pie, to top off an ample repast. The charming familiarity

she bred at St. Michael's, Mrs. Coughlin cultivated at Assumption College. Her presence in Sandwich was in no way a detriment to her son's popularity. Rather did it enhance it. For the cozy home atmosphere she supplied to all who visited her Campbell avenue haven touched in them a sensitive cord of delight.

That winter it was bitingly cold. The bitterness of a Canadian frost settled itself on the town and settled itself on the Coughlin household in illness. Mrs. Coughlin was again desperately ill; this time she was removed to the hospital. Dad and Father Coughlin visited her frequently, bringing cheer in otherwise drab, cold days of sickness. The young priest's ears were frozen hurrying to the hospital, as they had been nipped several years before when he crossed the grounds of Toronto novitiate to be in his skylight room by midnight.

They were cheerless days for him, too. Psychically, he shared his mother's illness with a mental suffering that undermined his vivacious and dynamic display in the classroom. It was a ravishing illness that dreadfully enfeebled Mrs. Coughlin, making it utterly impossible for her, in her weakened condition, to return to Campbell avenue. The upkeep of a fair-sized house was far beyond the capabilities of her diminished strength, and, at the son's suggestion, she and her husband boarded out for a short time. Subsequently the Campbell avenue property was sold. When convalescence invigorated Mrs. Coughlin once more, her husband designed and had built for her a house on Askin Boulevard. Time brought the joy of health for the time being, at least.

As I said at the outset of the chapter, the priest

was sent to Assumption College to teach English, history, and Greek. Later he taught upperclassmen philosophy and theology. His teaching of Greek carries with it a story.

On the very first day of the Greek class, he stated to his pupils:

"We shall start with the accent."

The students looked at him quizzically. The accent is the hardest part of the language, as the culturally-minded know. The boys thought: "Here's a man who knows his stuff. He's going to make us hop, all right." The unintelligibility of Greek hieroglyphics has been corrupted into the basis of a slang expression. "It's all Greek to me," in the vernacular, connotes a jovial confession of blissful ignorance. This interpretation, however, was not to be part of the academic training of the Assumptionites. There was something, too, about Father Coughlin's manner when he declared the accent to be the first milestone in their mastery that awed the students into a sincere appreciation of his abilities.

What the students didn't know, and what Father Coughlin didn't even try to keep from them, was that he was grinding out his own Greek lessons at night with Father Sharp, a "fine Greek scholar." He didn't tell them that he was being tutored the night before the class-day, although he was thoroughly honest with the students. When he was asked an embarrassing question that stumped him, he said:

"I don't know, figure it out for yourself."

But to the students it wasn't an admission of ignorance. They felt it was a greater urging on the part of the teacher for their deeper concentration and personal pursuit in the study of the language.

"My teaching of Greek was a bluff," Father Coughlin commented years later. "It was a very interesting experience—learning Greek while teaching it."

However, this is not a fair apprizement of his Greek knowledge, even though he joshed about it in retrospect. Rather was his tutelage with Father Sharp an expression of innate modesty, a desire to keep learning. Every night, the priest spent time with Father Sharp, in an effort to reach a proficiency in some measure comparable to his tutor's. Father Coughlin claims he was always only "one jump ahead of his students." Of the seventeen students he coached for college examinations, not one flunked —sufficient proof of his teaching ability.

The priest had a great capacity for work. He enjoyed teaching, and although some of the students were "sleepy-heads," it brought him delight to awaken in them some degree of culture consciousness. He was an eager member of the college faculty, jumping at the chance to substitute for an ill colleague. During these years, although he had a comprehensive teaching schedule on his young shoulders, he gladly, many times, took an eight hours extra a week. He was a glutton for work. His energy was boundless.

Usually, at Christmas, Mother and Dad Coughlin were obliged to enjoy the holiday feast alone, for religious duties took their son and his confrères to various churches for mass services. But after the Yuletide, the Coughlin household was spirited with "posthumous" celebrations—two, in fact. Christmas dinners were reënacted; the first feast for half the teaching staff of the college and the second feast

for the remaining priests. Throughout it all, Father Coughlin was sincerely happy.

During these years of teaching, the young priest cut quite a figure, especially in the English classes, where he made drama a wide-awake interpretation of life. Shakespeare was not a ponderous study of dry-as-dust pages from history, but a vivid portrayal of living, breathing human beings, as Father Coughlin taught it. He organized a "little theatre" movement at Assumption out of his inexhaustible ingenuity that made the rounds, successfully, from London, Ontario, to Pontiac, Michigan, including in the circuit various parish houses in Detroit.

As a theatrical producer, he achieved distinction. The student body fell in with the innovation. Drama was of the utmost importance, it seemed. The college had a fine gymnasium, but the gymnasium had no stage. And without a stage, theatrical productions cannot be produced. There was nothing else to do but build a stage. This the young priest, aided and abetted by his students, set out to do. There was an appropriation of $200. This amount was insufficient to meet the constructional expenses, but it was enough to get started on. Father Coughlin paid the $200 as a deposit on a shipment of lumber which he and the students hauled from the lumber yard to the college. The priest made a deal with the lumber merchant to pay the balance out of the profits of the forthcoming production which Assumption College Thespians were rehearsing for. As an initial performance, it was not to be a Shakespearean drama, but a minstrel show. It was scheduled for March seventeenth.

Joining with the students, the priest rolled up his

sleeves and plunged into the building of a solid platform for future dramatic exhibitions. They started construction around Christmas time and for the next three months worked like beavers to finish the stage. It was a much slower-moving project than they had anticipated in their enthusiasm, although they worked into the wee hours of the morning, sometimes until three A. M. Mother Coughlin sewed the curtains and, from the antiquated dresses in the attic storeroom, rigged together sufficient material for drops and other cloth properties. The students of Father's drama and English classes became, in actuality, carpenters, painters, electricians, and actors. One of the boys, now a priest, served as stage manager and Father Coughlin's Man Friday in these stage ventures. By March seventeenth, the stage was still unfinished. Its manager was still hanging precariously on to a beam, with paint brush in hand, while an impatient student body clamored for admission. Fifteen minutes behind schedule, a rare happening in the otherwise punctual life of Father Coughlin, the doors of the gymnasium were opened and the student body and faculty of the college flooded the space in record time.

The curtain was just about to be hoisted. The play was just about to go on. The interlocutor and his two black-faced end men were placed, ready for the overture, when with diabolical malice, the gymnasium's heating system sprung a leak. Spring had delayed its onrush of warmth for Sandwich, and the renovated theatre was as frigid as weather attendant upon a winter sports carnival. The room steamed with cold, like the drip-pan of an electric refrigerator. Salamander stoves, scouted for by

perplexed stage executives, and rounded up from the various studies of the college and living quarters of the teaching body, were assembled hurriedly and scattered throughout the gymnasium at various points of vantage.

But the gas fumes threatened ultimate asphyxiation. The audience began coughing itself into an apoplexy. There was no going on under such unbearable physical conditions.

"Hold the curtain," Father Coughlin commanded. "I'll be back."

Then he disappeared. Less than ten minutes later he returned. In his hands were two vials of perfume and two sprayers.

"Take this one and pour the perfume into it," he ordered his student assistant, handing him one bottle. "Spray it around the room."

Father Coughlin did likewise.

The sweet-smelling perfume somehow deadened the vile-smelling gas fumes, and, at last, the show went on—thanks to Mrs. Coughlin and her penchant for fragrant odors, and to Father Coughlin, who proved himself an ingenious "trouper" and a theatrical genius. The minstrel show was a howling success. It resulted in profits which exceeded the necessary balance due on the stage timber. It was the nucleus of artistic strivings by the college. Stage vehicles became part of the life. Acting and its lure enticed the students into a dramatic organization of limitless membership. Father Coughlin next decided to dramatize Shakespeare. Since his portrayal in the classroom of various compelling characters of the Bard of Avon proved an effective means of teaching, he adjudged, and rightly so, the

efficacy of stage dramatization of a play in its entirety. He sought his mother's help and appointed her wardrobe mistress of the Assumption College Shakespeareans. In true Shakespearean fashion, too, boys played women's rôles, guided in their mannikin display of apparel by Mrs. Coughlin's deft and feminine hand. Her finesse found expression in the impersonations and her son's stage direction was reflected in the acting—an unbeatable combination for success. Mrs. Coughlin took her commission literally and her appointment seriously.

Hamlet was scheduled for production. It was in rehearsal. A boy named Ken Cook was slated for the rôle of Ophelia.

"Fix up that white dress for him, the one you once had, Mother," Father Coughlin instructed the wardrobe supervisor. Ken stood by, silently, listening to the description of the Ophelia to whom he was to give life.

"That will be just the thing," Mrs. Coughlin replied. "And Ken will have to wear corsets——"

Ken blurted out refusingly:

"Oh no—well, do I have to wear corsets?"

The boy blushed.

"What a fine-looking woman you'd be without them, Ken," Mrs. Coughlin laughed. "I'll find you a pair somewhere. It will be all right."

Father Coughlin smiled to himself, secretly. Soberly, he added:

"That'll be fine, Mother. Ken will add realism to his portrayal. Be sure they are not too tight."

Ken Cook wasn't so proud of Ophelia, but he wore the stays Mrs. Coughlin discovered for him. And Hamlet went on.

Later; when Father Coughlin took his young Thespians "on the road," Ken dropped the realistic touch to Ophelia and gave his body freedom, the spectators none the wiser. During their theatrical itinerary, Hamlet was produced by the college actors for children at a special performance. At this showing, the school children of London, Ontario, comprised a receptive audience.

With natural understanding of the theatre, fostered in his days at St. Michael's, Father Coughlin expeditiously cut scenes from the play here and there, affecting fitting professional dramatization for special groups. He pencil-marked Hamlet for three different versions, and in each version different scenes were cut from different acts. Polonius, Shakespeare's Lord Chamberlain in Hamlet, and his son, Laertes, were strutting their stuff for the London pupils. On one side of the stage stood Father Coughlin, a copy of the drama in his hand, following the lines as his Assumption dilettantes recited them. In the opposite wing, his stage manager placed himself, pleased with the smooth going of the scene and its cast.

Polonius gesticulated:

"Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure, but—"

Father Coughlin decided to cut the scene. He flipped a pebble at his stage manager with expert marksmanship. Flipping tiny stones was a habit of the young cleric. His pockets were filled with the rock bits, ready for use at any moment. They came in most handy on the athletic field. The peb-

ble he thumbed at the stage manager, however, failed of its purpose. The assistant felt differently about the stage direction, and continued to countenance the scene, regardless. Again the priest flipped a stone. Once again the stage manager ignored the cue. He didn't ring down the curtain, but he looked up across the stage to the other wing. There he saw Father Coughlin waving his arms in semaphore fashion, pantomimically signaling him to drop the hanging screen. But the stage manager, with traditional temperament, flashed a resentful smile at his superior's interference. He turned to Polonius and Laertes and at once was lost in the "big moment" of their histrionicism. Suddenly a huge object whizzed past the manager's head. It nearly bowled him over, but he stepped back, luckily. Then and there he ceased toying with the priest's amiability and rang down the curtain. Father Coughlin had tossed William Shakespeare, bound in leather, clear across the stage, as a final warning. The volume, unspared in the toss, was rescued later.

Father Coughlin's pebble-flipping was an unusual eccentricity, the boys thought, but the virtue of such individualism straightway appealed to them.

The belief, once an athlete, always athletically-inclined, wrapped the young cleric in its influence. He didn't "word" his "left-overs" into shape. He showed them how gridiron tactics were acquired and the plays enacted. The priest repeatedly toed the football for a punt of some eighty yards. He developed the Ty-Coons of Assumption College, who easily vied for honors with the varsity squad and, in 1922, outstripped several powerful squads of Detroit's major high schools. The Ty-Coons rated

with the best in the section. Baseball and hockey were also in the priest's favor while he played and coached the school sports. Baseball games were special attractions, when in season, at Sandwich. In these matches, the cleric's prowess and perspicacity resulted in easy victories for his teaching mates when faculty and varsity teams "fought" it out on the diamond.

But to get back to his gridiron supervision. The boys he took were not even seconds on the varsity team. They numbered in all about a dozen. They were boys who had been refused under varsity rules of strength and endurance. But, as far as Father Coughlin was concerned, they were embryonic material. When he took them for training, he first inspired them with confidence. He told them to develop an attitude of self-assurance.

"Forget you didn't make the varsity team," he began. "Make up your minds that you are going to play football. Stick to the law of the game. Play fairly and squarely. Play hard."

His discipline, stern in the classroom, was tempered on the field, but was just as effective. When a player slipped, he was "pebbled." He understood. He looked over at his mentor, received further instructions, and reattempted the play. Before each game, he bolstered their spirits.

"You are going to win. Make up your minds on that score," he talked to them straight from the shoulder. "You are as good as any team in high-school ranks. Don't give up inside."

And then, before sending them out on the field of competition, he invoked the godliness of religion for blessings for the team. He lined them up, ordered

their heads bowed, and said three "Hail Mary's" over them. Taxicab drivers secrete a St. Christopher medal in their vehicles as a protective talisman against vehicular collisions and accidents. Father Coughlin's boys, each one of them, took the "Hail Mary" for himself on to the field. The priest had an uncanny driving power that the young students attributed not to any Napoleonic display descriptive of a "major of a death battalion" but to an infectious personality. He appealed to their growing manliness. They couldn't resist it. He was human with them. They appreciated it. He kept young and vigorous with vigorous youth who believed in him. They accorded him the greatest respect when they spoke to him, never forgetting that he was the priest and they were his pupils, never failing to honor him with the proper "Father Coughlin" when they addressed him. But among themselves they liked to think of him as "one of the boys." In the privacy of their boarding-school dormitory, they thought of him and familiarly talked of him as "Charlie Coughlin."

They had only one substitute for the entire team, since Father Coughlin's idea of football was a "team against a team, not an army against an army," as is present-day custom. Though his gridiron coaching might not be approved by the best and most scientific methods of modern sport, the priest devised for his football novices an inimitable routine of guaranteed development that, perhaps radical, gave results. It resulted in muscle-bound puissance to fortify his young athletes; also in closer friendships and a dozen satellites. Father Coughlin trained his squad of youngsters, still in their teens, for the big game

of the year by hard work. The players toted coal from eight o'clock in the morning until nine o'clock at night—and on the day preceding the match. And among the coal-toters there was not one dissenter.

Coal had been purchased by the school authorities. But coal in a coal yard cannot be burned there to heat school buildings, and there was no means of transporting it. Father Coughlin said to his players:

"How about it, boys? Do we lug the coal ourselves from the yard?"

Lusty voices howled, "Sure," and so the football members of Father Coughlin's personal team made for the yard and their labor. On the Friday before the game with one of Detroit's large high schools, the boys still had one car to go. They kept right on with the job until it was ended.

"You boys are in great shape," Father Coughlin told them before the game. "You must win. You can do it. I know you will. Go out and show me."

And when they did win, he said:

"Great work, boys. That's the spirit."

That simple praise was sufficient to goad them on to continued victory. For their teacher, they knew, was "one of them," ready to pitch in with them at any task, however menial.

There was a carload of potatoes that needed to be freighted from its source to the college. Again Father Coughlin put it up to his boys. And again, the potatoes were transported to Assumption College, where naturally they did the most good.

But Father Coughlin was not confining his talents wholly to the college. The world beyond its campus knew of the young priest and had heard his golden voice in stirring speech.

## CHAPTER XI

*"For wisdom is more active than all*
*active things; and reacheth*
*everywhere by reason of her purity."*

*—Old Testament, Book of Wisdom.*

WITH the years, when a man reaches thirty, should come mellowness of character and of outlook, and a condoning tolerance of life generally. It is disheartening to find, too often, that for some the comedies of youth are the melodramas of maturity; the follies of boyhood are the foibles of manhood. If we stir humanity in its great melting pot, we find that some continue, contentedly, their pinched existence, totally oblivious to the vicissitudes of the world in which they live; while others, with a mellow vein of cheerfulness, exercise an active regard. Some, with no sweetness, softness, richness attendant on a weary maturity, stay within the narrow confines of their domiciles, often wretched, and of their employments, more often life-sapping; others extend a radius of vision and interest that reaches, with persistence and perseverance, the fruitful goals of their ambitions.

We have before us, now, a young man, a priest, just past thirty, whole-heartedly absorbed in his religious work but with a searching scrutiny that takes him far beyond the rim of teaching—a "researcher" of life; a cleric abreast of the times, keep-

ing pace with the parade of humanity as it marches past his vision. Let us look at him as he moves about in the community. He is substantial-looking, a few inches short of six feet, and robust. He stands erectly in his well-fitting clothes. He walks with stately dignity. His eyes are piercing, but their flash is tempered with gentle kindness—clear windows to his bright soul. His movement is brisk. He jokes about this and that. He has a prolific brain. The vernacular of a younger generation is not alien tongue to him. He uses it; he likes its descriptive pungency. When he smiles, the benignancy of his personality becomes a warming ray of sunshine. There is elegance in his face of a kind that springs from a source far beneath the skin. He has temperament, but not temper. When he speaks, he enthralls, he holds, he compels one to give ear. What he says is dispatched with drama, of human interest, appealing to the inner being as well as to the rationalism of a well orientated intellect. He talks with enthusiasm, with the agility of smartness, with the ease of brilliance, with the liveliness of vigor, with sincerity that cannot be misconstrued. He knows what he knows thoroughly; and what he knows he is unafraid to say. He has conviction; he has faith. He is decisive, not aggressive. He is ambitious, but not selfishly vain.

When a man reaches thirty, he becomes introspective. It is time to gather and bind into a sheaf the loose fringes of earlier years, and into a component whole, earlier thoughts, to view objectively the nucleus from which adult interests must be shapen. When a man reaches thirty, it is time to think of that future which holds his best years and links him to

stark reality. It is not enough simply to have lived and worked in accordance with the dictates of his profession; he must build anew from past experiences a greater mental security from which to draw in those years, fleeting as they are, which give and ruthlessly take.

And so we have Father Coughlin, zealous in his work, happy with his lot, but still a stout valiant carrying on for himself and for others. We have a man whose mind belies his years; a man capable of tuning one's soul with the universe. A man, not merely anxious to "get by" comfortably as one of God's henchmen, complacently smug in pleasant surroundings, but one dimming his eyes in study of life's concrete motivations, that, true to his ordained mission, he might lead a blinded flock out of the darkness by a language they most easily understand. Religious verbs and nouns, dull recitals of Godly admonition, feeble promise of purgatory—this was not the full medium. We have Father Coughlin in his study in determined concentration on the classics; we have him reading newspapers and trade journals—many of them—evaluating the mirrored reflections of the seething emotions of mankind; translating Congressional records in comprehension of a nation's housekeeping; bent over religious treatises to add higher levels of wisdom to a substructure of scholastic masonry. It seems impossible that one mortal can be so boundless with energy, with such capacity for efficiency, so inherently strong to forcibly exert his initiative, so competently able physically—but these are the facts.

The ineffaceable stigma of a barbarous war had colored his impressionable youth. It had indelibly

GOING ABOUT THE DUTIES OF HIS PARISH

scarred his boyhood illusion of universal brotherhood. It influenced his adult attitudes. And now from the ashen memories of a conflict during which he was only a "bystander," he resurrected an analytical survey of the absorbing problems which confront men and women united in nations. When a man reaches thirty, he really begins to understand.

As a teaching priest, his duties also included service as Sunday assistant to pastors in various parishes which took him to Detroit, Windsor, and the environs. There was his service at St. Teresa's in connection with Assumption College. And for two and a half years before he took leave of the college he was Sunday assistant to Father Charles Hennigan at St. Agnes' Church in Detroit, on the fringe of the city, with the open country beyond. In both parishes, he extended a relationship beyond the seminary, which the parishioners enjoyed. They liked not only what he said, but how he said it. From new bottles he poured the mellow thickness of old wine. From ancient wisdom he paraphrased modern philosophy. He cloaked modern fancies and interests, modern principles, in the canonicals of religion. It was different; it was new; it was distinctively an innovation. The Golden Rule was still the Golden Rule, even as Father Coughlin preached it, but his listeners were fattened on a religious diet they never before had tasted.

As assistant to Father Hennigan, Father Coughlin received his first schooling in parochial work. Father Hennigan, a faithful parish priest, a slave to his curatory, taught Father Coughlin the duties of a curate. Under him the young priest served a fine apprenticeship.

"I was green when I first went to St. Agnes'," Father Coughlin smilingly remembered, "and Father Hennigan showed me how. The schooling he gave me in parochial work has stood by me ever since. In a few weeks he could teach you more than a seminary could teach you in three years. When you looked at Father Hennigan, you saw Justice personified."

Father Coughlin, who as Sunday assistant at St. Agnes' was obliged to divide his time between the college and the Detroit church, was unable to see much of his parents. But a sweet and anxious substitute of motherly affection was Mary Shea, housekeeper at St. Agnes' rectory. As much as her busy routine of cooking and cleaning permitted, she watched over the group of assistant pastors with endearing solicitude.

"And you haven't your rubbers on, Father," she lamented, catering to his physical protection from inclement weather.

But Father Coughlin often would be at the outer threshold of the rectory and he would go along without them, despite the caution.

Mary Shea, who, when she died, had one of the finest funerals in Detroit, with a solemn high requiem mass celebrated by the priests she mothered, was very much a part of that priests' house. She was especially beloved by Father Coughlin who saw in her gentle simplicity and humbleness the constantly reminding goodness of his mother. For men, great as they are and however helpful to mankind they may be, must have a maternal somebody looking after their small needs and caring for them.

Some months before he severed connections with

the college to take up new duties, Father Coughlin was one of several priests of the faculty invited as guests to attend a celebration at a near-by convent. As Fathers and special visitors, they were seated in the front of the hall. The priests were called upon to say a few words in customary honor of the occasion. Usually the leaders of faiths dispatch their feelings with platitudinous remarks. They smile an appreciation for the invitation of their presence. They hopefully predict the best and intone divine blessings. They utter—pleasantly, to be sure—prosaic appeals. They are lavish with their smiles and graces, but their greetings are polite echoes of each other's remarks, dull phrases of sentiment. The priests who attended this function were little different. But when Father Coughlin arose, the atmosphere was electrified at once. He glanced over his audience, religiously minded as himself. To begin with, he had that "something," indefinable, that captivates. And, too, he suffered from no dearth of ideas. He had a choice of sparkling epigrams. He had something to say that was not "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." He always had something to say. He had a message even for those who, like himself, were disseminating Catholicism. Could we foretell a man's fame, we might preserve in treasure vaults a complete record of earlier comments; we might save his total utterings for reprinting. But religious celebrations are too infrequently reported for posterity. Suffice it to say that Father Coughlin's brilliance on this occasion ranked him high among clergy and women satellites of the faith.

By word of mouth, admiration for his ability spread. It reached the business men of Windsor.

The Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, and other organizations of men of importance heard of him and sent for him. They solicited his presence at luncheon and dinner meetings. They gave undivided attention to his addresses. His historical allusions were paraphrased illustrations of twentieth century understanding. He compared the "double-crosser" of modern life to Judas Iscariot, the traitor among the Apostles and betrayor of Christ, one moving in their midst ready to knife them at the slightest provocation. Judas became a "two-faced hypocrite" in his revamped phraseology. This was intelligible interpretation of religion. He never repeated himself. His application of religion to business affairs varied with the groups to whom he spoke, for the gatherings were not always all of his faith. He didn't talk Catholicism exclusively, but he sermonized on a basis of Christian philosophy. There was no "two-timing" religion and getting away with it, he maintained. Deferred reckoning, he continued, compounded the interest until the physical torments wracked not only the mind in payment, but the body. Father Coughlin was anticipating the day when he would have a parish before whose congregation he could stand and preach the gospel of Christ as His missionary. He was first a priest, but, too, he was an orator of incomparable eloquence, of dramatic wit and gesture. We only can expound on things that have gone before us, and on which others have voiced opinions, but we can have the happy faculty of cloaking our phrases in such a way that will cut to the core and grip. This Father Coughlin did. The cloth of words had been given him by others, but the pattern of design was entirely his own.

It is granted that the first high spot of Father Coughlin's career came on January 17, 1923, when he stood up in St. Alphonso's Church in Windsor, Ontario, and delivered his eulogy of the Honorable William Costello Kennedy, eminent member of the Canadian Parliament. His encomiums for the deceased introduced him to a lay world which otherwise might not have known him at this time. Before a saddened audience, sharing the bereavement of a beloved statesman and a noted parliamentarian, Father Coughlin lifted his voice and said, in part:

"It is those whom Christ loves most who suffer most. Christ, who loved Peter, caressed him with an upturned cross. St. John's love was priced with a boiling caldron. He kissed his blessed mother and sealed it with the seven words of sorrow. It has been so all down the centuries. Love of God and God's love for us go hand in hand with sorrow."

It was an emotional appeal, touching as it was sublime. It was a panegyric both brilliant and impressive which provided several pages of a book published later as memorial to the occasion. Those who knew the young priest and who followed his career with interest, agreed that on this event, Father Coughlin displayed peerless oratorical calibre.

Not long afterwards, he celebrated Sunday mass in the Detroit church. He was still a teacher, mind you. The congregation, loyal to the church, however, had lapsed into ways of religious laxity. The parishioners attended mass faithfully, but many would leave quietly after the last gospel, too impatient to remain and answer the prayer. Father Coughlin, aware of this remissness, decided that no such "walk-out" would occur while he stood on the

altar with the biretta on his head. Toward the close of the service he felt a stir of restlessness coming from the congregation. Slowly he turned and faced the worshipers. He was calm. There was dignity, but flashing eyes punctuated a command that was not to be taken lightly. He ordered:

"Let no one dare leave this church until I have left the altar."

And no one did. The congregation sat up with straightened shoulders and wide-awake interest. He knew what he wanted; the validity of his coercion was not to be refuted.

His days at Assumption College were drawing to a close. Seven years had passed since first he arrived at Sandwich and accepted the dignities and responsibilities of priesthood. Two and a half years had gone by since his introduction to parish work. In May, 1923, with this as a background, he said good-bye to his colleagues, and under instructions from the Right Reverend Michael James Gallagher, D.D., Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Detroit, he moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan, a city in the midst of a broad area of prairie land and oak openings. At Kalamazoo, in the celery center, 143 miles west of Detroit and 45 miles south of Grand Rapids, half-way between Detroit and Chicago, he was assigned as assistant pastor. The Michigan city with its extensive spread of agricultural richness, its fresh water and inland lakes, housed him for only three months. But in that short period he acquired the fundamentals of parish organization and congregational development. Unlike the average city in western Michigan, Kalamazoo never was a lumber town. It was and is principally a factory city. It

had more than two hundred factories at the time, and during his three months' stay in the city railway center, Father Coughlin learned much about the standard of living of factory-employed men and women. Family budgets and living costs were a little out of his line, but these, too, he brought into the quiet of the rectory. With scholarly resolve, he applied himself to economics, "the science that investigates the conditions and laws affecting the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth," or "the material means of satisfying human desires."

In the early fall of the same year, Father Coughlin arrived at Detroit, chief city of Michigan, with its northern boundary touching the southern limits of Ontario, Canada. He moved back to familiar territory to renew acquaintance with persons and places, to continue friendship with Father Sharp, his Greek tutor, and to enjoy with him the pretentious music dramas of an opera season instituted by music-lovers of a large city. Again he was to serve as assistant pastor, his second such assignment; but at St. Leo's in Detroit he had a larger field on which to exhibit his talents. With a congregation of about ten thousand adherents, there was plenty of work for him to do and also for the other several assistants among whom the religious labors were distributed. Father Coughlin's first duties, however, consisted of expansion work in the parish, building up mass attendance, and extending a glad hand of welcome to newcomers. His popularity among the worshipers, which spread quickly and attracted huge throngs of ardent admirers to the cathedral, was common knowledge at the diocesan headquarters several miles removed. Bishop Gallagher, who was later to be

his "Captain Courageous" in a singular adventure, had the eyes of an especially interested superior on the young priest within his ranks. Secretly he was pleased with Father Coughlin's promise and talents, with his charm which revived the interest of slipping adherents. When Father Coughlin preached, he did not preach to empty pews; worshipers flocked to St. Leo's and other places where he was scheduled to speak. He preached not in the manner of a reformer, with deep, sonorous bellowing. It was like listening to a friend, in pleasant conversation, recite a vivid tale of personal interest. They were eager—St. Leo's parishioners—to hear his soft, musical voice, tonally inflected like the tidal waves of a rolling sea on a sandy beach.

The elaborate ritual of a cathedral mass appealed to their senses. But the high-powered articulations of the young cleric, who painted on a religious canvas the ecstatic colors of a sweeping brush of understanding, depicting the clear sky of man's anticipations, opposing the doctrine that man's obligations were limited to, and dependent alone on man and human relations, were rich left-overs digestibly edible at later meal tables. He amazed them with his frankness when he dug into secret closets and ferreted out skeletons of dishonesty, moral waywardness, and "man's inhumanity to man"—however embarrassing. Father Coughlin dressed up his preachings along the thoughts expressed by Pope Leo in his encyclical, "Human Liberty," of June 20, 1888, from which Vatican letter the following are excerpts:

"Liberty, the highest of natural endowments,

being the portion only of intellectual or rational natures, confers on man this dignity—that he is in the hands of his counsel and has power over his actions. . . . Man, indeed, is free to obey his reason, to seek moral goods, and to strive unswervingly after his last end. Yet he is free also to turn aside to all other things, and, in pursuing the empty semblance of good, to disturb rightful order and to fall headlong into the destruction which he has voluntarily chosen. . . . Having a false and absurd notion as to what liberty is, either they pervert the very idea of freedom, or they extend it at their pleasure to many things in respect of which man cannot rightfully be regarded as free. . . . Therefore, the true liberty of human society does not consist in every man doing what he pleases, for this would simply end in turmoil and confusion, and bring on the overthrow of the State. . . . Likewise, the liberty of those who are in authority does not consist in the power to lay unreasonable and capricious commands upon their subjects, which would be equally criminal and would lead to the ruin of the commonwealth."

It is to be taken literally that Pope Leo moulded the young priest's thoughts and shaped his observations on the changing conditions and changing attitudes of people. From the Pope's cloth of wisdom Father Coughlin fashioned his own pattern of appeal. In Pope Leo's encyclicals, and later in the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, he found an oasis to quench his parched thirst for papal approval. Of a later encyclical, issued on Christmas Day, 1888, from the Vatican by Pope Leo, Father Coughlin made further use, studying the ideas and sentiments therein contained, to revamp in phrases of his own, for the understanding of the masses.

He worded choice gems of sermons from these Vatican excerpts:

"If we inquire into the kind of life men everywhere lead, it is impossible for anyone to avoid the conclusion that public and private morals differ vastly from the precepts of the Gospel. Too sadly, alas, do the words of the Apostle St. John apply to our age: 'All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.' For in truth, most men, with little heed as to whence they have come or as to whither they are going, place all their thoughts and all their care upon the vain and fleeting goods of this life; and, contrary to nature and right order, they voluntarily give themselves up to serve things of which their reason tells them they should be the masters. It is a short step from the desire of comfort and luxury to the striving after the means to obtain them. Hence arises the unbridled eagerness to become rich which binds those whom it possesses, and while they are seeking the gratification of their passion, hurries them along, often without reference to justice or injustice, and, not unfrequently, even with insolent contempt for the penury of others. Thus, very many who live in luxury call themselves the brethren of the multitudes whom in the depths of their hearts they despise. . . . They call self-love liberty, and think themselves free like a wild ass's colt. Snares and temptations on the stage; books and the daily press jeer at virtue and ennoble crime; and the fine arts themselves, which were intended for virtuous use and rightful recreation, are made to minister to depraved passions. Nor can we look to the future without fear; for new seeds of evil are continually sown broadcast in the hearts of the rising generation. . . . When the mind has thus been poisoned,

the moral character becomes at the same time deeply and substantially corrupt. . . . Poisonous doctrines have corrupted both public and private life; rationalism, materialism, and atheism, have begotten socialism, communism and nihilism . . . fatal and pestilential evils, which naturally, and almost necessarily, flow forth from such principles. . . . If the soul is by nature one with the body, and if therefore no hope of a happy eternity remains when the body dies, what reason is there why man should endure toil and suffering here in the endeavor to subject the appetites to right reason? The highest good of man will consist in enjoying the comforts and pleasures of life, and since there is absolutely no one who does not by an instinct and impulse of nature strive after happiness, every man will naturally lay hands on all he can, in the hope of living happily on the spoils of others."

Ten years later, Father Coughlin paraphrased this latter thought and told me in one of the many interviews I had with him, his face lined with gritty determination:

"Do you know how I would live if I renounced religion and was illogical enough to disbelieve in a life beyond—in the real life? Why, if I threw away and denounced my faith, I would surround myself with the most adroit hi-jackers, learn every trick of the highest banking and stock manipulations, avail myself of the laws under which to hide my own crimes, create a smoke screen to throw into the eyes of men, and—believe me, I would become the world's champion crook. If I didn't believe in religion and in a happy beyond, I would get everything for myself that I could lay my hands on in this world. Men and women who don't get everything out of life for

themselves in this world, if they disbelieve in the existence of the next, are fools—asinine fools!"

It was this kind of verbal revamping of Pope Leo's enunciations at St. Leo's that won him instant favor from his audience and full attendance whenever he spoke within the church or at civic gatherings.

Pope Leo had said:

"The light of learning, and this in no small degree, is needed in the priest, because it is his duty to fill others with wisdom, to overcome error, and to be a guide to the many in the steep and slippery paths of life."

In this declaration, Father Coughlin found ample acquittal for his unconventional and "anomalous," as some maintained, interpretation of religion. For, since the essence of his sermons came directly from the encyclicals of the Supreme Pontiff, Leo, and other great scholastics, he could feel thoroughly justified in fashioning his words in such a manner that from those who listened he would elicit no lukewarm interest or drowsy response. Then, too, his original serving of Catholic tenets must have appealed to his Right Reverend, for Bishop Gallagher approved and sanctioned the efforts of the young priest and developed a fond liking for his ingenuity and initiative. This eminent man of the church, therefore, must also be considered a part of the divine plan which shaped Father Coughlin's ends. Had Bishop Gallagher been a different type of spiritual overseer, a man relentlessly orthodox in the dissemination of religious doctrines, a superior imperiously opposed to the glorification of a priest within his ranks—though it was in the glory and expansion of Cathol-

icism—there might never have been brought about that combination of circumstances by which Father Coughlin was sky-rocketed to national recognition and acclaim. These things, all in all, must not be lost sight of in the full appreciation of the achievements of an individual.

But we have Father Coughlin at St. Leo's now, with another year of assistant service ahead of him before taking over as a full-fledged pastor the guidance of his own parish. And he is sermonizing too, in addition to Pope Leo's papal designations, along the lines of intimate knowledge of human nature chronicled by Thomas à Kempis in his soul-stirring document, "Imitation of Christ." The German ecclesiastic and author—who died in the fifteenth century after spending an exceptionally long lifetime of seventy years as a monk at the monastery at Mount St. Agnes, where with the Brothers of the Common Life he shared the Canons Regular of St. Augustine—wrote, among other enlightening proverbs:

"Truly it is misery to live upon the earth," and further, "Yet so drunken and blinded are men that they understand it not, but like dumb beasts, for the poor enjoyment of a corruptible life, they incur the death of the soul." . . . "We are weak and unstable, we are quickly deceived and soon changed." . . . "Here a man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, held fast by many fears, racked with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, compassed about with many errors, worn out with many labors, vexed with temptations, enervated with pleasures, tormented with wants."

From these ideas, and from the many more which Thomas à Kempis "wove into a literary fabric" of inestimable influence for good, Father Coughlin shaped fine and remarkable discourses. He offered, however, in addition to the rewards of spiritual consolation, constructive and concrete criticism for the regeneration of a failing social and economic system, tying up his observations with the prevailing problems of the day. From Father Coughlin and Thomas à Kempis, there is a comparison to be drawn.

Born Thomas Haemerken at Kempis, a town forty miles north of Cologne, he was "a modest child destined to become the most famous man of his age," according to a recent biographer. In a 1922 edition of the "Imitation of Christ"—compiled by Brother Leo, F.S.C., professor of English Literature at St. Mary's in Oakland, California—is quoted from "Phases of Thought and Criticism," by Brother Azarias, this commentary on Thomas à Kempis:

"He probed the human heart to its lowest depths, and its inmost folds; he searched intentions and motives, and found self lurking in the purest; he explored the windings of human folly and human misery, and discovered them to proceed from self-love and self-gratification."

It is easy to imagine Father Coughlin at this age, slightly more than thirty-two, as a young man with the same soul-searching ambitions, a "born leader of men"; with a purpose similar to that of Thomas à Kempis who was preëminently human, and who, at the age of forty, completed one of the world's classical masterpieces; thinking, too, as did the Mount St. Agnes monk:

"Everywhere have I sought for peace, but nowhere have I found it save in a quiet corner with a little book."

For ultimately, Father Coughlin confided to me last March, when his work is through and his missionary service brought to a close, when the final curtain is rung down on the conspicuously dramatic record, originally portrayed, he plans, in thoughts of reverie and meditation, to enter a Franciscan monastery. To find there, in its peace and quiet, the "common heritage of the race" and to enjoy the cell as did the son of the Kempis mechanic, in whose own narration of the experience "The cell, constantly dwelt in, groweth sweet—a dear friend and a most pleasant companion."

Brother Leo quotes from "Heautontimoroumenos"—the work of Terence, a Roman dramatist, believed to have lived from 185 to 159 B. C.—in paying tribute to Thomas à Kempis. Last March, one of Father Coughlin's former students at Assumption College, Sandwich—now a priest teaching at the same Catholic institution—used the same single quotation in summing up his appreciation of the character of the man who was once his teacher.

"Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto."

Both Brother Leo and the Assumption College priest translated the line: "Nothing that is human can be foreign to us." But I like more freely to construe its meaning: "I am a man, and nothing of the common sympathies, passions, and failings of men can be alien to me." We can, therefore, with Terence, sum up not only the feelings of Thomas à Kempis, his attitudes, and his beliefs, but the char-

acter and personality of Father Charles Edward Coughlin, who, too, was "a modest child destined to become a famous man of his age."

Brother Leo points out that Thomas à Kempis, in the library at Mount St. Agnes, acquired in the "pagan" books a first-hand acquaintance with Seneca, Ovid, Cicero, Horace, Virgil, Lucian, and Marcus Aurelius. However far-stretched and far-fetched my comparison may be considered to be, Father Coughlin, too, searched between the pages of these "masterful pagans" with the attitude of a scholastic, to later dig back into his memory and refer to Cicero as "that corrupt old hypocrite," and to Seneca as one "who despoiled Britain by usury." The cloistered monk, who, Brother Leo writes, was an "eloquent and convincing preacher," has, in this, the twentieth century, a modernized counterpart in Father Coughlin. For, like Thomas à Kempis, Father Coughlin urged upon the parishioners at St. Leo that eating and drinking, sleeping and watchful waiting, working and brief respite in leisure were not all of life. In the words of the monk, he impressed them with "how great is human frailty which is always prone to evil"; how an "abundance of temporal goods" went hand in hand with "tribulation and perplexity." Man must be satisfied with a moderate portion, the young priest emphasized over and over again.

Father Coughlin was building up a sweet life, but a life that was not sweetly commonplace. In eighteen months of service at St. Leo's his appreciative followers numbered thousands. A few years later they numbered millions.

## CHAPTER XII

*"I speak truth, not as much as I would,*
*but as much as I dare; and I dare*
*a little the more as I grow older."*

—MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE.

AT this point, let us go back three years—that later happenings in Father Coughlin's life may not appear so strange—and refresh our memories of that epochal year, 1921. American men and women, free and over twenty-one, allegedly entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," experiencing a post-war campaign of reconstruction activities, were enticed into sampling legislation that prohibited the use of hard liquor and other intoxicants. Andrew J. Volstead, the "Abou Ben Adhem" of the United States Congress, who called himself "as one who loves his fellow-men," formulated the act which bears his name—the Volstead Act, subsequently to parent the National Prohibition Law and be entered in the Constitution as the Eighteenth Amendment—and had succeeded in persuading the legislative angels at Washington to adopt and "write in their book of gold" his liquor measure. On November 23, 1921, a gullible public, victimized by "a delusion, a mockery, and a snare," awoke that morning "from a deep dream of peace," with a dazzled vision of the future, to find that they had wilfully yielded to a law that not only interfered with their freedom, but

clouded their constitutional rights as citizens of a world power. Over the veto of the President, the late Woodrow Wilson—sacred champion of the Democrats—the legislation was passed as an "expedient" measure in the hopeful but fraudulent belief that a damaged nation would be magically rehabilitated.

Father Coughlin was a Canadian at this time. The predicated goodness or badness behind the motives of the Volstead Act he viewed with impersonal perspection. But now, in 1924, transferred to one of the large parishes in the Detroit diocese, an American community of automobile employees and employers principally, presumably subservient to the statutes of a government "of the people, for the people, and by the people," he became part and parcel of American life. As a priest, propagator of the faith for Americans, he was naturally concerned with their ideals, their morals, their mode of living, and their respect for law and authority. And he focused a merciless spotlight on the effects of prohibition as reflected in the responsive feelings of the masses, in the alleged license of the socially prominent, and in the arrogance of the men and women about town.

When he was young, liquor—"the luscious liquor," as John Milton versified about it—was no secret drink that had to be spoken of in whispered riddles or guarded in locked cellar, its key a priceless jewel. Old-fashioned Irish, his parents always had "a little something" in the house for home use and "for company's sake." They gave no two thoughts to it. It was as natural as the medicine bottle in the bathroom chest. And because it was a taken-for-granted and

matter-of-fact household commodity, he grew up with no enchanted desire for its sweetly mysterious taste. He never saw any drunkenness in his own home, nor did he ever see his friends sacrificed at the shrine of Bacchus. When he was young, he saw no smacking of lips, nor wry faces that paradoxically approved a "swig" with "gee, that's great stuff," nor voracious bottle-draining. He didn't grow up in a generation that makes of liquor labels a highly specialized academic pursuit. All his friends were temperate. In his own home, his parents brought out the whisky bottle only on rare and state occasions, and for special guests. Beers and wines were used in moderation and in wholesome sociability. He grew up ignorant of the tipsy, reeling, staggering sot—unkempt, profane, and foul-smelling. As a young man, he found that under temperance people did not drink as they do in a reign of prohibition—madly, licentiously, dissolutely, like swine wallowing in the flowing mire of "blind pigs" and barricaded "speakeasies," and to the "hotsy-totsy," half-time syncopated barbarism of gaudy and bizarre night clubs.

When he was a youth, he learned that a "dead soldier" was a man who courageously gave his life, in war, for his country. But, as a man, in America, he watched a nation's millions line up armies of "dead soldiers," that, in terms of humanity, would have wiped its population off the face of the earth. As a man, in America, he witnessed the frightening connotation of two words that threatens the physical collapse of a people. He learned that they were liquor-emptied (often poisonous moonshine) bottles, that surreptitiously had been passed between men

and men, women and women, men and women, and young boys and young girls, in a régime of lawlessness and wantonness identified with bootleggers and bootlegging, racketeers and racketeering, vice and corruption, crime and murder, gang wars and hoodlum outrages, from which illicit and mountainous gains were distributed among gutter-rats and polished gentlemen.

As for his own habits—he has a physical incapacity for drink. The smallest amount of whisky—Father Coughlin shrugged his shoulders to indicate that he is unable to imbibe even the most negligible quantity. And even wine—

"I certainly should not drink it for enjoyment," he explained later. "But my own physique does not enter into the question. I am opposed to prohibition. I am in favor of the absolute repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment."

It is not to be concluded later, therefore, when as its staunch foe and one of its most vicious indicters he denounced the "noble experiment," that his vituperations were based on impulsive judgment. Rather it is to be remembered that he built up his opposition to the law over a period of several years, to climax his feelings at a time when a nation was willing and anxious to listen to him. He berated the prohibition law, not as an attack on its legality, principally, but because of its un-Christianity and its contrariness to the practice of his God and the holy doctrines of the Bible; because it countenanced moral deterioration and enticed young America into its mucky eddies and cesspools; because it parented lawlessness and godlessness; because it dressed the gun-toting "gorilla" in the tuxedo of cultured society. So armed, he an-

swered his scoffers and the proponents of the Volstead Act and the Eighteenth Amendment.

While at St. Leo's, he taught Religion for an hour a day in the parochial high school. He devoted his mornings to teaching and his afternoons to the parish. In the evening, when not preaching or called upon for other service, he read and studied. One evening, over the dinner-table, in pleasant review of a day's work with those of the rectory who did as he did for St. Leo's, he expressed casually the opinion that he could preach seven sermons a night for a week. It might have been a bit boastful, if one knew nothing of or was unable to imagine his accomplishments. And then again, I don't believe Father Coughlin expected his confrères to take him as seriously as they did. When he announced the intention, the other young curates picked him right up on it, not doubting his ability to find words for expression over so long a period, but his endurance of strength for such an ordeal.

"You're crazy, man," they told him. "It can't be done. You couldn't bear up under the strain. It would take the strength of a superman," they argued.

"Wait and see," Father Coughlin smiled and replied. The challenge, somehow, fired his interest.

Curiously, the assistants did "wait and see." Father Coughlin, however, did not preach seven sermons each night for a week, but he did preach seven sermons a night for the first three nights of the week —a total of twenty-one sermons. Think of it! And he could have continued and completed the challenge, his friends finally agreed, had he been assigned, for the amazing task did not jag his strength. It is surprising that he warded off serious head colds dur-

ing the winter months, and that his health and vigor were not impaired by his constant application of himself to religious toil. For he was careless of his personal comfort. Many times he braved the rain and snow storms with little concern for possible resulting illness and with no comforting protection from the inclemency of the weather. At St. Leo's, he did not have his mother close by to tuck a warm scarf around his neck inside his coat collar; to scold him into wearing his rubbers and carrying an umbrella; to indulge him into changing his wet clothes when returning from a performance of duty, drenched to the skin by a downpour. For, many times, without being fully dry he would return to the outside with small thought of self; in appointment with another parish obligation. Such was his inexhaustible interest in his labors; such was his sacrifice for religion. He had an ideal—Service.

During Father Coughlin's affiliation with St. Leo's, the "Seven Last Words of Christ" were offered to the Catholics of Detroit as a dramatic presentation for the first time. In the shaping of its appeal as a three-hour devotional during the observance of Holy Week, Father Coughlin had no inconsequential hand. Every year since, he has conducted a Tre Ore service of his own and according to his own dramatization of the mortal utterances of Christ attendant to His crucifixion.

With these last words of Jesus, descriptive of man's inhumanity, Father Coughlin, also, addressed a bewildered public, rounding out Christ's thoughts when first He said, after the Romans had nailed Him to the cross:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

If ever a man applied the essence of his teachings to his work, if ever a man dug back deeply into the classical instruction of his early training, Father Coughlin did. There was no thought he knew and always remembered, that he did not apply in his preachings. Father Coughlin was not a man to learn and forget. Religion seeped in his mother's veins. The brilliant teachings and writings and enunciations of the Holy Fathers—of the classical masters of generations past, interpretative of Catholicism—seeped in his. The depth of brilliance accompanied his brilliant delivery.

Father Coughlin had reached the limit of his apprenticeship. He had demonstrated to Bishop Gallagher his cheerful and skillful execution of the office of assistant pastor for eighteen months. Smaller Catholic communities needed the far-reaching influence for good and the far-sighted vision of such a priest—young, vigorous, and willing. Out-of-the-way places needed such a man of the cloth to reach their hearts. A tucked-away parish needed a priest with "big" religious ideas.

## CHAPTER XIII

*"Zealous, yet modest; innocent though free;*
*Patient in toil, serene amidst alarms;"*

—JAMES BEATTIE.

CICADAS, shrilling long, hissing tones, sang to North Branch farmers that the harvest season was not far distant. The roseate-blush of a late summer crescent was promising of a full, flaming planet to usher in the reaping carnival. Tract upon tract of uniformly cultivated land, receding beyond the vision of the eye, held a profusion of tall, bearded wheat, majestically swaying in the mild breeze. Farmsteads dotted the countryside—little cathedrals standing in overlording survey of rich abundance. Six-legged larval ticks, the baneful insects of nourished land, dodged in and out of the outlawed grass and bushes, under the felling blows of keen-sighted farmers. It was close to the time for gathering the crops; for drawing from the earth the tangible and satisfying rewards of arduous plowing. It was the anxious season of the year for those who labored with agriculture. The autumnal equinox was soon to mark its calendar date on September 22. Farmers were anticipating, hopefully, the recording of profits in the "logs" of the field.

North Branch, north of Detroit on the Pontiac, Oxford and Northern Railroad, was the banking and post-village of Lapeer County. It was eighteen

miles northeast of Lapeer and just a few miles north of Imlay City, in the spreading territory of Michigan that broadens into a fertile peninsula, thrust into Lake Huron. North Branch was a little community with a little Roman Catholic church; a "sleepy hollow," sheltered by nature from the surging centers of industry and, fortunately, ungarbled by the beehives of machinery. The lowing of cows, the whinnying of horses, the snorting of swine, the scratching of fowl in henneries, the long rows of furrowed channels welcomed a stranger to a town where the backs of men were bent to the earth. And to a farming community dependent for its existence on the whims of the elements, where men, "by the sweat of their brows earned their daily bread."

To such a little community and to SS. Peter and Paul, its little church, came Father Charles Coughlin, dimly recollective of his own farming labors at St. Basil's Novitiate. He came one late summer day in 1925, to assume, as his first charge, the spiritual guidance of a farming community. The reins of a pastorate were now in his close to thirty-four-year-old hands. Father Coughlin was a keen student of human nature—that is to be granted. But the language of farmers, their language of crops and harvesters, of reapers and binders, of land impregnation, of grain and vegetables, of harvest ticks and harvest flies, of irrigation and fertilization, of farming economics, was something new and something strangely fascinating.

"I was a hick—just a big city hick in a small community. Here were farmers, land tillers. What did I know of their hardy lives? What did I know of farms and crops and harvesting? Nothing! If I

was to reach them, I decided that I must be able to talk to them and with them in their tongue. Naturally I set myself to learning about the science of farming. I wanted to understand, fully, their problems," Father Coughlin retold his experience.

Here you have a further, enlightening instance of the man who never felt that he was so self-sufficient that he could not "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest."

The townspeople were flattered by the naive confession of their new and young curate. He wanted to learn about the crops; they would teach him. He was a priest who could be spoken to easily. Who was accessible, I should say. He was an affable cleric and a courteous and sociable man. He was a good "mixer," with an irresistible personality. He was frank and honest, as he was earnest, in inviting his parishioners to supply him with information about the organized and scientific pursuit of agriculture. Often he went out into the fields to watch the farmers at work, to get close to the "doings" on the land, that he might better appreciate the difficult domestication of the frequently stubborn earth. In their homely parlance, North Branch farmers talked of their priest as a "good pastor, a good fellow with all his friends, and a friend to anyone who knows him."

When Father Coughlin arrived in this little community, he found waiting for him a nice, little house and some land around it. He had driven from Detroit to this hamlet in his automobile. He discovered that there was no garage to store his machine. Ideas were born for development and execution and Father Coughlin had an idea that he would

build himself a garage. He went right ahead with the project.

"And then, all of a sudden," he explained later, "I awoke to the fact that I was getting myself deeply in debt with my big ideas. That was something to worry about for a priest taking over his first parish. So I looked around me to see if I could find a way out."

And the ingenuity that had stamped him in the past as a man of clever initiative and mercantile acumen, cropped out again to demonstrate itself in an unusual enterprise.

Father Coughlin had been in the town only a short time when North Branch, the county's mail-box, became, also, the seat of the county fair. With the falling of the leaves and the dogwood crimson of October, announcement was posted throughout Lapeer County of the annual "mammoth fair, carnival, and exposition." Townsmen and farmers and their families from the nearby communities and from the tucked-away villages, flooded into North Branch to judge an imposing array of cattle and to view, with a competitive eye, the exhibition of wares and products of the land and the dairy. There were, in addition, the usual novelty events, the continuous round of vaudeville entertainment, and the innumerable displays of blatant "ballyhoo" on a midway of curiosities and fantastic amusements. Fat men with "aldermanic" abdomens, hard eyes, and rakishly-tilted hats, elevated above the swarming crowds, voiced through megaphones, into the attentive faces of these simple-living people, the raucous appraisement of the freakish attractions of their side-shows. Carnival troupers, the "Foreign Legion" of the theatre,

moved seductively before the sight-seers, their minds on the purse-strings of these willing spenders. Day after day, night after night—for the better part of a week—men, women, and children, enjoying a temporary surcease from labor, rattled all modes of conveyance in a steady rotation to the fair grounds. Sheep, poultry, swine, and horses, restlessly moving about in their stalls, were exhibited in large numbers. Flowers, fruits, and vegetables were at their best when the fair gates opened wide an entrance to an arena of educational and pleasurable diversions.

Father Coughlin said to himself:

"I'll go out there to the fair grounds and see how they do things."

He drove to the carnival as a scrutinous spectator to comprehend the magnitude of such an undertaking. When he arrived at the grounds, he was caught up in the gay whirl of exciting interests. There came to him this thought:

"Why not a church fair?"

He played with the idea like a child with a toy; the longer he played with it, the greater was the attachment. And the longer he watched the activities, the firmer became the resolute notion to conduct a similar carnival. There was the liability of the garage that had to be met, hanging over his head like the foreboding evil of Damocles' sword. He paid particular attention to the Village Hippodrome, and imagined in his mind the old-time side-show of clean and wholesome features that he would offer at the church fair. He examined closely the many eating places and the display of food. To his well-ordered understanding, the fair methods seemed all wrong. He felt that the promoters had not taken

PIE EATING CONTEST AT FATHER COUGHLIN'S FAIR

full advantage of the possibilities in such a turn-out of holiday-spirited visitors. As he watched the county fair, he conceived a carnival with newer attractions and a more varied and interesting program of entertainment.

That night he called into his little house a small group of representative parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul. To them he pictured his idea of a fair. He told them that a profit could be made and that he would arrange for the outdoor project if he had the coöperation of the congregation. To his own confidence, he added the assurance of the men that the community would assist him in every way possible to promote a fair that would be a money-making venture. Father Coughlin rolled his sleeves to the elbow and eagerly applied himself to the plans of the forthcoming enterprise. He had been a theatrical producer for Assumption College in his spare hours, an "attraction" for St. Leo's; now he would be a fair promoter for SS. Peter and Paul.

From Detroit he summoned music bands and clowns. He ordered a wealth of balloons, ice-cream and thirst-quenching tonic and other edible tidbits. Canopied eating places were constructed under his supervision; booths were erected for the display of merchandise. The fruits of the fields were assembled and exhibited, primarily to be sold. Everything had a price tag and everything was purchasable. Around the antics of the clowns and the music of the bands, he set up a midway of wholesome fun and frolic for grown-ups and for children. And when the preparations were completed and the carnival ready to start off with a bang, the gates of the fair grounds were opened to the community for "Father Coughlin's

Fair." Pretty girl parishioners of St. Leo's—Father Coughlin made their pulchritude a requisite—came up from Detroit to assist him and, among other things, to sell tickets. With their irresistible smiles and the spell of their charms, they made a harvest of money for him as saleswomen. Several of the young women, thanks to their feminine minds, and with the approval of the priest, clothed their lithe and sinuous figures in the smart dress fashions of the year and walked a carpeted runway in a style show especially designed for the women of the community. Father Coughlin's Detroit friends evinced genuine interest in his fair and came to North Branch in large numbers. For the followers of Terpsichore, there was dancing under the harvest moon. It was a one-night show, but with his "big-little fair," Father Coughlin established a record for attendance and an extraordinary record for receipts. As a one-night venture, it was singularly successful, both from a standpoint of finances and of pleasurable entertainment.

Father Coughlin drove home to his little house that night weary and *so* tired, but happy. Accomplishment of that which we set out to do—proof of our abilities after the earnest application of energetic efforts—is, indeed, a cheerful discovery and a gratifying sensation. When the tallies were counted and the income totaled, he learned, surprisingly, and with no little satisfaction, that his speculative enterprise had been the means of collecting $1,700. The sum was greater than had been the entire profits of the full stay of the county fair. To himself, Father Coughlin mused that he was not such a bad business man. His admiring parishioners, loudly singing his

praises, labeled him a first-class promoter. The proceeds of the fair netted him the defrayal of the garage obligation and a remaining tidy sum with which to discharge current expenses and running expenses for a few months.

He was all set now. The community was zealously attached to his religious bit. They moved at the slightest tug of the reins. No such human dynamo—no such powerful force—had ever before struck North Branch. However, his stay was short—only six months. His Right Reverend had other plans for him.

When he left, his departure was a red-letter day of sadness. Now in North Branch the community reckons calendar happenings from the time "when Father Coughlin was here."

## CHAPTER XIV

*"And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

*—New Testament.*

On May 17, 1925, the eyes of Roman Catholics the world over were turned to Rome and to the Eternal City. There, amidst the esthetic splendor and reverential wealth of St. Peter's religious solemnity, Pope Pius XI celebrated the ceremony of canonization of Blessed Sister Therese of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, a Carmelite nun of Lisieuz, France. Against a Roman sky—flaming with the light of five thousand tallow torches, saucer-shaped lanterns, in revival of an ancient custom abandoned after the illumination of June 28, 1870—was outlined the cathedral's lofty dome, looming up over Vatican City, to make more beautiful Michelangelo's exquisitely designed cupola. Under such festive lighting, more than sixty thousand pilgrims from all parts of the globe, heightened by religious fervor, footed the arched ascent of smoothly rounded cobblestones to the gateway temple of the world's most consecrated area.

At the peak of a slight elevation, St. Peter's mighty cathedral stands, a fitting zenith, as it were, to link the pillared arches of sculptured saints, fig-

uratively, to join together the hands of holy men and women, martyrs of Christianity, who from the tops of the columns look down in architectural beauty and simplicity upon the heads of worshiping followers. On either side, at the elbows of the arches, are placed two carefully wrought fountains of consummate excellence, to stand in refreshing coolness before the portals of the religious paradise. St. Peter's, with its broad expanse of brick steps, is the entrance to the papal city.

The canonization of 1925 was the first of the Holy Year. Since the new saint—who died in the holy odor of sanctity in 1879 when only twenty-four years old—was a child of the present generation, multitudes made excursions to Rome and St. Peter's Cathedral, filling to overflowing the entire building, hung with rich brocades and satin damasks. Hundreds of delicate glass candelabra were suspended from the lofty ceilings. And the impressive basilica, filled with a magnificent profusion of natural and artificial roses, recalled the promise made by the saint a few days before her death:

"After my death I shall let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven in doing good on earth."

Of the twelve thousand American laymen and church dignitaries who journeyed to Vatican City to witness the gorgeous and spectacular ceremonies of canonization, Bishop Gallagher was one. Before he left Detroit for Rome, he had made tentative plans for the continued service of Father Coughlin. But not until his return from the solemnly beautiful celebration were they executed.

Saint Therese, who in life was the self-acclaimed "mystical bride" of Jesus, was in death His Mission-

ary. Her appeal for permission to enter the Carmelite Convent at Lisieuz, one of the most ancient in the world and one of the few set apart expressly for the cultivation of mystical or contemplative religion, was granted by the gentle Pope Leo when she reached her fifteenth birthday. Since Saint Therese and Pope Leo have been the instruments of such dramatic interludes in Father Coughlin's career and of such compelling and inestimable influence on his personality, let us examine more closely the life of the young religieuse whose brief earthly span predetermined her sainthood fifty-two years after her birth. Her story is a beautiful one.

Two years before, on April 29, 1923, Blessed Sister Therese had been beatified by Pope Pius XI. And in August of 1923, when the beatification triduum was held at Lisieuz, where she died, the observance—"one of the most impressive acts since the war"—was attended by a legate designated by the Pope, three cardinals (one of whom was Denis Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia), fourteen bishops, and five hundred priests. She was already popular as "The Little Flower of Jesus," and was prayed to and venerated by the faithful who were charmed by the sweetness of her radiant teaching. In 1925, after her admittance to the sainthood and the recording of miracles through her faith, she was thought of as the "Home-like Saint, charming and fragrant, just the size for our unheroic times."

Saint Therese was born Marie Françoise Therese Martin at Alençon, in the south of Normandy, in France, on January 2, 1873—the daughter of Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin, a jeweler in the Rue St. Blaise. She was the youngest of nine children and

one of seven daughters, five of whom lived to serve in religious communities. There is living today, in the Carmelite Convent at Lisieuz, a sister to the Saint. Probably no other saint has fired the religious zeal, devotion, and piety of a world of Catholics as has this young nun. Her short life of complete material renunciation and religious dedication behind the cloistered walls of the Carmelite convent has transcendentally thrilled millions. Her simplicity and burning love for Christ when she was a mere slip of a girl, and which in the retelling has stirred the faithful to tears and infinite love, is one of the beautiful pages of Catholic annals. Her entreaty to Pope Leo XIII (of whom she wrote, "his piercing black eyes seemed to read my very soul," in her one and only book, an autobiography penned at the instigation of her Carmelite superiors), is another page of inspirational humility. Her little volume, devoted primarily to her spiritual and mental life, has been termed the "wonder book" because of its incalculable power in combating agnosticism.

In this little book, which later spurred Father Coughlin on to religious heights, Saint Therese tells of her audience with Pope Leo on November 20, 1887. As a little girl, with her sister, Celine (who joined the Carmelite Order before Saint Therese), she journeyed from Alençon as one of a band of fervent pilgrims to Rome during the year of Pope Leo's Jubilee observances. Two of a vast audience, the sisters waited to receive the papal benediction and to kiss the papal ring. They had both planned to speak to the Pontiff and to place before him the matter of her entrance into the Carmelites, Saint Therese writes. They waited in that tremendous

rectangle, hung with cardinal-red brocades and impressively hushed (I, too, had an audience with Pope Pius XI—last October—and never have I seen a more gorgeous display of religious richness)—waited for the signal to kneel before the Holy Father. So in abeyance, they heard with frightened awe the injunction of the stern Vicar-General of Bayeux, who commanded the throng to pass quickly and under no circumstances to speak with the Pope. The heart-broken young girl turned and whispered her sadness to her sister. She asked Celine what should be done.

"Speak," the older girl replied.

This was sufficient for the enthusiastic child.

She knelt before Pope Leo and received his blessing. Then she turned up her face, seraphic and beautiful, and began her appeal. She told him of her approaching fifteenth birthday.

"Holy Father, I have a great favor to ask of you——"

She pleaded for the privilege to dedicate her life to God on that day. Placing his hand upon her head, Pope Leo finally said:

"My child, if it is God's will, you will enter."

On April 9, 1888, some five months following her entreaty, the child was admitted to the Carmelite Order, her favor personally granted by the Pope. Two years later, on September 24, 1890, she took the veil. And on September 30, 1897, she passed from life.

During her seven years behind the Carmelite walls, she achieved no distinction. She lived in ardent pursuit of a life that was dedicated to the rose of "childlike faith, of simple piety, of humility and

littleness." But in death, by the philosophy she left behind her in the "wonder book," she achieved countless graces and inspired the working of miracles. She cried out as a child to the hearts and souls of mankind through the touching pages of her volume; as Father Coughlin was to cry out through a tiny silver disc, electrically charged, from a tiny parish erected in her honor.

Saint Therese, who wanted to be a missionary for mankind, wrote that mankind might read and understand these "Little Flower" sentiments of religion:

"I feel that my mission is soon to begin—my mission to make others love God as I love Him. . . . To teach souls my Little Way. . . . To surrender oneself as a victim to Love is to offer oneself to every anguish, to every bitterness, for Love lives on sacrifice; and the more a soul wills to be surrendered to Love, the more must she be surrendered to suffering. . . . To remain little—it is to recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from the good God, not to be too much afflicted about our faults, for little children fall often but are too small to hurt themselves much; in fine it is not to make one's fortune, nor to be disquieted about anything. . . . Again to remain little is not to attribute to self the virtues we practice; but to acknowledge that the good God places this treasure in the hand of His little child to be made use of when required. . . . I want to forget this world; here below, all things weary me, I find no joy save one, that of suffering . . . and this joy, though unfelt, is above every other."

Early in the year of 1926, Bishop Gallagher returned to America and to the Catholic diocese of

Detroit. He was one of the many of the American hierarchy who was fired with religious fervor to honor the canonization of the Carmelite religieuse. He looked about him in the Catholic territory, of which he was the head, for a suitable place to erect a temple in her honor—a temple that would serve on earth the missionary spirit of the young saint.

Royal Oak, thirteen miles north of Detroit, hungrily begged for a place of worship. Thirty-two Catholic families were huddled together in fortifying unity in the midst of a hotbed of Ku Klux Klanism. Prejudice and hatred, intolerance and religious bias, bitter anger and evil sparks of persecution charged the air. Machinations of the devil were born under the hooded regalia of ironic whiteness. Muttering men with burning, threatening, menacing eyes and formidable costumes—terrors of the night—surreptitiously moved with the darkness, too cowardly to face the scrutiny of daylight, to stench the air with their satanic cruelties of vile and bigoted misunderstanding. Gleefully, like madmen, species of the phrenetic persecutors of the Dark Ages, they countenanced the heinous offense of their insanity. And they gathered, stealthily, under the blanket of night's dead stillness, in miserable conclaves for the drawing up of their conscription lists of marked men and marked religions. These were frightening days. These vicious spirits—and some of them still live—hovered over sections of the country in laughing defiance of the pitiful resistance that was offered in opposition to their atrocities.

Royal Oak was the raw, desolate, partially inhabited suburban frontier to Detroit—a "jumping off" place. It was a barren strip in a veritable wilder-

A NEAR VIEW OF THE SHRINE

ness, "just where immense wealth on the North touches, and on the South, a poverty unsurpassed in America." It was betwixt and between, and the tiny Catholic community wailingly cried out for religious protection. It was out in the "broad open spaces" where a priest could bury himself in fearful loneliness or boldly raise his voice and give tongue to a message that would be heard "round the world."

From North Branch, Bishop Gallagher summoned to him—Father Coughlin.

So commanded the eminent man of the church: Build your church at the crossroads—at the crossroads of faith and religious persecution—at the intersection of Woodward avenue and the Twelve Mile road—in Royal Oak—in the midst of the fiery hatred of Ku Klux Klanism. Build your church there in the wilderness. Name it the Shrine of the Little Flower. Make it a missionary oasis in a desert of religious bigotry. Preach Saint Therese's message, "I will sing always even if my roses must be gathered from amidst thorns; and the longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter shall be my song." Raise to appreciative hearing the sweet voice of this child missionary.

So spoke Bishop Gallagher to Father Coughlin.

"—and upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

So spoke Christ to Peter.

And so recognized Father Coughlin the order of his Superior and the words of his God.

## CHAPTER XV

*"A voice of one crying in the desert:*
*Prepare ye the way of the Lord,*
*make straight his paths."*

*—New Testament, John the Baptist.*

FATHER COUGHLIN'S church—the Shrine of the Little Flower—a small, simple-framed, low-shingled building of russet brown—was completed in the summer of 1926. It had a seating capacity of six hundred to satisfy the ambitious hope of the young priest who anticipated, within the next three or four years, a sufficiency of worshipers to fill it. Bishop Gallagher had advanced $79,000 to Father Coughlin as initial capital with which to meet the cost of construction. On completion, the church property figured a cost of $101,000. And there was no rectory. That, of necessity, would have to come later. From the very beginning, from the very first service held within the celestial confines of this church of utter simplicity, Father Coughlin practiced what he firmly believed, original as it was. His church would never have a collection basket, be it of mere wood or of solid silver. Everything about the cleric was distinctive—his manner, his personality, his mind, and now his interpretative conviction of the religious reactions of men and women.

"People give to the church of their own free will, because they want to do so, not because they have to do so," he announced publicly.

His order for interior fittings for the Shrine of the Little Flower, therefore, did not include collection boxes. The salesman who took the priest's commission, concluded that Father Coughlin had forgotten the matter of collection containers, and of his own accord instructed his company to ship, with the remainder of the fixtures, six attractive containers to catch the eye and the fancy of the cheerful givers. Father Coughlin sent them back. He wouldn't have them, and that was that.

In explanation, he said:

"This church is built for the glory of God, and those who assist in paying for it are going to do so without the aid of collection baskets."

When the first service was held in the church, the congregation, experiencing the same attitude as had the salesman, decided that the lack of collection baskets was an oversight. They thought that in the rush and religious fervor of opening a new house of worship, Father Coughlin had neglected to bring out the receptacles for contributions. And so the worshipers gave their offerings of silver to the ushers as they passed out of the church. As time went on, the custom continued. Father Coughlin never once mentioned money at any time or during any service in his church. No one was ever asked to give dollars or cents. It costs money to erect churches and it costs plenty of money to live, as everyone knows; the priest maintained that churchgoers to his temple were acquainted with the words of the Holy Writ:

"He who preaches the Gospel must live by the Gospel."

The little church which had brought gladness to the lonely hearts of thirty-two Catholic families,

however, built "under the shade of melancholy boughs," fired the intense bitterness of those who would destroy it. Ku Klux Klansmen did not want the simple-framed dwelling of Christ in Royal Oak. They were not in sympathy with Catholic teachings or Catholic churches.

It was early in July. The church had been built but two weeks. It was a clean-smelling haven of newness. Father Coughlin took up residence, for the time being, at the home of a parishioner. Late one night as he sat alone in his room, his thoughts with the future of his first real religious venture, the jarring ring of the telephone broke the trend of his planning and stirred him from his mental quiet. Over ringing cables come the frantic message from a kindly disposed neighbor that his church was on fire, that he had better come quickly. Picture the abject feelings of despair that crowded the mind of this not yet thirty-five-year-old priest as he hurried out to the monument of his efforts. As he neared the building, anxious parishioners taking up the march with him, he discovered with paradoxical joy that his church was not ablaze. There, right beside it, burned a fiery cross, the foul symbol of the hooded order. Its crimson glow of bigoted hatred flamed a warning of repugnant hostility and treacherous antagonism. Incensed parishioners and sympathetic neighbors vehemently pushed down the blazing cross with branches. One woman grabbed a twig from a near-by tree and, symbolically, shall I say, beat the bloody life out of the devilish insignia.

Then, when it was all over and the cross no longer glowed its ravishing incandescence, and the church remained unscathed and untouched by the

THE ORIGINAL CHURCH—GROTTO OF LOURDES—FATHER COUGHLIN PREPARING A SERMON

brutality of black-hearted men, the priest shook himself free of dejection and turned to the small group around him. Father Coughlin lifted his noble face to the heavens, and with deep religious passion roared rebelliously:

"Some day—we will build a church and raise its cross so high to the sky that neither man nor beast can burn it down."

That was in 1926, at the very outset of his career with the Shrine of the Little Flower. Like Saint Therese, who promised to "let fall a shower of roses," Father Coughlin intoned a prediction which three years later assumed the beginnings of reality.

With the unhappy feeling of unrest and religious prejudice which surrounded his unpretentious church, the priest deemed it wise to sleep in the vestry of the Shrine; to be close at hand for a similar occurrence; to vigilantly abide further manifestations of the Ku Kluxers. Summer was slowly slipping into fall; the breezy coolness which sheds the trees of their leaves divorced the warmth from his makeshift sleeping quarters in the religious abode—uncomfortable and trying, to say the least. But he remained in his tabernacle, huddled in his berth, despite the cold and dampness of the brumal nights. This was a mere and minor physical inconvenience, however; greater was his worry about the iniquitous activities of the Klan and his distress over the outstanding financial obligations of the church. Interest on the diocesan loan amounted to about $100 a week; his Sunday collections averaged something less than $50. The difference was a little too high for even a far-sighted priest to reconcile under the circumstances of a "wilderness" parish. Worshipers, however faithful, need

the satisfying and pleasant comfort of a heated church to draw them beyond the portals into religious houses. Father Coughlin, a sad and sorry picture of a man talking to himself, lamented that there was no coal in his church coal bin. And, too, there was precious little money in the exchequer to carry on church activities, to say nothing of his own personal needs, reduced to insignificance by necessity.

Digging back into his memory of those not-so-long ago days of trials and plaguing vexations, Father Coughlin analyzed for me his feelings at the time.

"Adversity had a great deal to do with what you term my 'success and fame' which has been to me simply service. I believe now as I did then, that adversity, as well as necessity, is very often the reason for action. If I had had a comfortable parish and a comfortable rectory—pleasant escorts to religious duty—and if my Bishop had not been the inspiration he was and still is, all this probably would never have happened. But there I was sleeping in the vestry, threatened with pneumonia, shivering with the cold, and unwilling to admit defeat. Something had to be done. Bigotry had to be stamped out. It was my job to know what and how to do it. I had to think. And I did—hard and long," Father Coughlin said.

And something was done. For doesn't the New Testament point out:

"Every man's work shall be made manifest." . . . and, "Charity shall cover a multitude of sins."

Father Coughlin's charity shall cover the multitude of sins committed by the Klansmen. He was

the "Reverend champion stood" of Oliver Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." Father Coughlin was:

> "The Village preacher . . .
> Remote from towns he ran his godly race, . . .
> But in his duty prompt at every call,
> He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all; . . .
> Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
> And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray."

Through a mutual friend, Father Coughlin made the acquaintance of Leo J. Fitzpatrick, who was then manager of WJR, a small radio station independently owned by "Dick" Richards. The meeting took place in Fitzpatrick's office, a cubby-hole in those days, on the top floor of the Book-Cadillac Hotel in the heart of Detroit. Fitzpatrick, a versatile fellow with a charming personality, had achieved nationwide radio fame as the "Merry Old Chief" of the Kansas City Nighthawks, an aggregation of hilarious air-funmakers and musicians who disported themselves over the wave lengths around midnight hours (according to the section of the country) before coming to Detroit to assume executive supervision of a radio station.

At Father Coughlin's suggestion I went to see Fitzpatrick and nicked a few hours from his very busy afternoon. He was now manager director of the more important and widely extended station WJR. Fitzpatrick sat behind an expensive desk of commanding attention, in one of a spacious suite of offices in a vast wing on the twenty-fifth floor of the

magnificent Fisher Building, one of the world's largest sky-scrapers.

"Father Coughlin?" he asked. "Sure I have time to talk about Father Coughlin—one of the greatest men this country has produced. I was never so sold on an individual as I am on him. He is doing more to break down religious prejudice than any single factor in the United States."

He sat back, temporarily unmindful of the responsibilities of one of the country's largest radio stations, called for his records and began:

"That was back in 1926. I had a small office then. Radio was in its infancy. Its future was then uncertain. Father Coughlin and I met that fall—around the first week in October, I think; introduced by a mutual friend. It was just a few months subsequent to his opening of the Shrine at Royal Oak. He was much younger then, and his face lighted up with the same enthusiasm as it does now when he speaks. He talked about the serious situation he faced, about the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, and recited a story of low finances and no resources. He wanted to do something. I asked him how he would like to go on the air. I had heard something about him as a preacher; I asked him what else he could do. He told me he could play the organ and sing a little. I advised him to try a flier on the air and note the results. He wanted to know full particulars about the cost of time and other expenses, for if the idea was too expensive, it was way out of the question. I gave him complete information that he could outline to Bishop Gallagher. His interest was genuine and whole-hearted. There wasn't any Catholic leader, any priest, on the air, and I figured it

might be worth his trying. So I told him I could arrange to let him have the time free, but that he would have to stand the cost of the lines. And I quoted him the bare figure—$58 a week. If he 'went over,' then we would talk terms and time prices, I told him."

Let me break into Fitzpatrick's story and say that Father Coughlin had awakened that chilly October morning with the abysmally low spirits of a "gloomy cleric." But that night, after the encouraging advice from Fitzpatrick, he fell asleep with a beautiful dream of continued life for his church and the discharge of all debts.

The next day, Father Coughlin hurried to the Diocesan headquarters and confided his plans to Bishop Gallagher. The Bishop listened attentively to Father Coughlin's arguments and his plea for permission. Bishop Gallagher has always listened to Father Coughlin. He is tremendously fond of the priest; he always has been.

"Saint Therese is the modern Apostle and the radio is the modern medium of preaching the gospel to all nations," he told his Right Reverend. Bishop Gallagher acquiesced. Father Coughlin returned to Fitzpatrick and they planned the priest's air debut. The priest hurried to his friends and committed his proposed method of action to them. Should he solicit money from the radio audience? he inquired. After all, the Shrine of the Little Flower had to be kept and maintained. His radio appearance was not to be a glorification of self. He was, primarily, to narrate his plight and struggle in that "wilderness" of fiery crosses. He was tempted to solicit funds over the air.

"Die nobly! Don't commercialize your religion," his good friends advised him.

In their recommendation he found impressive truth. He abided by their prudence and their counsel. Since he was original enough not to ask for money in his church, he continued the originality and did not ask for money over the air. He took to radio to acquaint a distant public with his tribulations; again he decided that the words of the Holy Writ were known to them. What is and has always been an old story, he realized a little later when he said:

"People who try to make money their prime motive generally fail. Those who make service their ideal, make money too."

Father Coughlin drew a full, religious breath and took the leap. He made his initial bow to the unseen audience on Sunday, October 17, 1926, at two o'clock, Detroit time. Standing behind the microphone, especially installed by the station for the service, the priest spoke directly from the altar of the Shrine of the Little Flower. He was garbed in his vestments. On his head rested the black biretta. Then he impatiently sat back and waited—waited for the verdict of a critical, fickle, and suspecting public.

When we stop to realize the "why" of fame—ephemeral at best—and its running-mate, recognition, somehow we inadvertently, perhaps, overlook the little accidents of life that clear the road; somehow we fail to give Fate her just due in our material belief that we are the "captains of our soul." There is talk of persistence and perseverance and hard work, all very well applied in the ultimate achieve-

SPEAKING FROM THE ALTAR OF THE SHRINE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

ments of success. But back of it all, in a clear apprehension of the scheme of things, we must recognize a greater power that guides our destinies—"the living voice is that which sways the soul." We must, therefore, recognize the Fate which intensified Father Coughlin's adversities; Fate which brought him and Leo Fitzpatrick together; Fate which dated the canonization of Saint Therese in 1925; Fate which propitiously countenanced the advent of radio; Fate which gave to Father Coughlin a Bishop Michael Gallagher for his "Captain Courageous"; Fate which permitted him to grow to manhood to live in an era of economic depression. Belief in Fate, it has been said, is a lazy man's manner of accepting and defining life. That, however, is a lazy and disdainful way of dismissing a phenomena, baffling throughout centuries. There is no other way but to bow to Fate and Divinity to explain the series of events that fortuitously pre-determined Father Coughlin's actions and over which he had no control.

In these trying times he needed the solace and cheerful support of his parents. He sent for them and they hurriedly answered his beckoning summons. With the building of his own church, it was a safe conclusion that he wouldn't for some time be moving to other fields of religious conquest. The Coughlins came to Detroit and took up abode at 3262 Hogarth avenue, after purchasing a spacious and comfortable eight-room house.

A day or two after the broadcast, Father Coughlin hurried into town and to his parents' house. He was excited, like a child, when he cheerfully announced to them:

"I've received five letters."

"That's fine, son. There'll be more later," his mother assured him. He blushed.

At the radio station, many more than five were received, appreciative missives of congratulation. Father Coughlin spent a happy thirty-fifth birthday on October 25, 1926, eight days after his microphonic initiation. His eyes looked into an interesting future, which he realized demanded of his talents abundant resourcefulness.

"Father Coughlin clicked," Fitzpatrick now takes up the story once again. "It was surprising to learn the vast area those letters covered. They seemed to extend to the far corners of the country. And each letter was a warm expression of interest and a request to hear the Royal Oak priest regularly. Father Coughlin decided to go ahead and we decided to feature him. The Paulist Fathers of New York, noted preachers, made use of the radio at the time, but Father Coughlin's Shrine of the Little Flower at Woodward avenue and the Twelve Mile road was the first Catholic church to go on the air to spread the Gospel. He stuck to religious sermons, but he had a style that was different. His voice registered well over the radio and his enunciation was unusually pleasing. First there was a musical program and then he spoke. He was a knockout, 'radioically' speaking."

Father Coughlin's blast on bigotry and his vivid and exciting recital of the conditions and disadvantages which surrounded his Shrine at Royal Oak to make more difficult his achievement of spreading the teachings of Christ, found ample sympathy and understanding among the radio listeners of a great nation. For within a few months of his initial air

appearance, letters began to pour in. His idea to put "the universal credo in Christianity" met with instantaneous success. Again, what he said and how he said it shot him into distinguishing esteem. He made of his air venture a "pay as he went" proposition. Less than six months after the first service in the Shrine and the occasion of the blazing warning, Father Coughlin's church was crowded with admiring worshipers and the priest found it necessary to plan ways and means to care for the overflow. His scoffers became his prayers.

On January 16, 1927, the priest added another unique distinction to his long line of creditable accomplishments and to the glory of the Shrine of the Little Flower. For the first time in the history of religion, a Novena of prayer was conducted on the air. It was the first time in the history of the world, actually, that a Novena and a series of mission sermons were preached over the radio. Of this experiment, singular in kind and in excellence, Father Coughlin was the happy parent. Folks from small towns, and people living as far south as Virginia and as far west as Minnesota and the Dakotas, "tuned in" on the holy voice of the Royal Oak cleric and his radio Novena in honor of Saint Therese. His preliminary announcement of the radio mission brought a flood of sanctioning letters from listeners all over the country. A boiling down of the geographical and religious statistics contained in the letters revealed that Catholics in twenty-three states had signified to the "radio pastor" their intention to "make the mission" over the air. This, of course, was supplemented by daily mass in the traditionally prescribed Catholic custom, in the churches where they

lived. A musical program under the direction of Professor D. Morell of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, an organ sextet, and a male choir supplemented the service and Father Coughlin's sermon, all of which took to the air every Sunday afternoon at two o'clock.

Father Coughlin, true to his original contention, refrained from asking money. It became a "tabooed" unmentionable. Yet listeners responded generously with free will offerings of appreciation.

Listeners became curious about the location of Royal Oak; and Royal Oak—a raw, undeveloped suburb of Detroit—magically became a large spot on the country's map. Detroit newspapers went to Father Coughlin to ask explanation of the radio Novena and the unusual church services of the air. "Copy" was sent out from the radio station descriptive of the priest's growing and far-reaching popularity.

In an interview with a *Detroit Free Press* reporter, printed in that paper's edition of January 17, 1927, Father Coughlin explained his position:

"When one thinks of the hundreds of miles traveled by Saint Paul along the coastal cities of Greece, when one visualizes historically the hundreds of converts which he drew to Christ through his indefatigable labors, he cannot but know the potential good which can be accomplished by his successors who are making use of God's latest gift to man—the radio.

"Until the church services were sent out over the radio, it was difficult to believe that there were so many shut-ins in the country. The most heartening feature of the work is the letters that pour in from

these people, men and women, of no denomination and of all denominations, scattered over the land, many of whom have not been able to get into the sunshine in years—and to all of whom the Novena has brought great comfort and spiritual solace. We avoid prejudicial subjects, all controversies, and especially all bigotry. We all believe in God, in the three Divine Persons, in the birth of the Saviour in the manger, and in His death on the cross at Calvary. At the Shrine of the Little Flower we are trying to put the universal credo into Christianity. Saint Therese is the modern apostle and the radio is the modern medium of preaching the gospel to all nations. Like Christ whom she imitated, 'The Little Flower of the Child of Jesus' left the ninety and nine and went out after the one that was lost. So, it is entirely fitting that from the parish shrine, erected in her honor, should come the call to prayer and the preaching of His word that all men might come to know the Saviour and to love Him. We invite all who believe to join our radio congregation."

From a pastor of a simple-framed church without collection baskets, of a church in the wilderness, of a church unheralded and attacked by its enemies, Father Coughlin became a pastor with a congregation living in twenty-three states.

Crowds followed the arrow to the Shrine of the Little Flower to see the pastor whose forceful and convincing voice they heard Sunday afternoons over the wave lengths. Many journeyed to Royal Oak out of curiosity. Whatever the reason, all who filled that small church and saw within its sanctuary the figure of a cassock-garbed cleric standing behind a microphone, were thrilled and stimulated within when they heard his fine preachings transmitted into

power by an amplifier somewhere concealed, broadcasting religion from the sanctuary itself. This was something new, something decidedly different, something extremely interesting.

The Royal Oak church took on the aspect of becoming a National Shrine to Saint Therese. The possibility was there; Father Coughlin entertained such a possibility very shortly after he viewed the returns of his novel labors. In less than six months after his radio debut and his appearance behind the metallic microphone of phlegmatic indifference, groups of religiously minded of all denominations from his radio audience were organized into Leagues of the Little Flower in almost every state in the Union, as well as in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and England, the members contributing one dollar a year for membership toward the building of the church and its upkeep. His invitation to join the radio congregation was heartily welcomed. Uncle Sam's mailmen carried to the church door sacks of mail, many containing the offerings of those who cared to give; others, written expression of appreciation and the sad postscript of their inability to donate —but all contained words that filled a golden beaker of happiness for Father Coughlin.

His rectory had been built. The work had increased to such an extent that an assistant pastor had been assigned to him. And he was receiving the homage of a thankful community—a token of his civic importance. With loyalty came security.

Within a year of his first broadcast, Father Coughlin was weighed down under the happy task of opening bags of mail. The next season he was obliged to hire girl clerks to handle the growing job and

"THE MICROPHONIC APOSTLE"

to tabulate the correspondence of the Radio League of the Shrine of the Little Flower—the name he took for the gigantic project born of radio. For the next few seasons, he continued his broadcasts over station WJR only. He was very much a fixture of the station, since there was no denying the requests of "Bring him back," from ardent air fans. In the warm-weather months the priest assembled his material for the fall and winter sermons. He was building up an unseen audience of inconceivable numbers and developing into a national celebrity.

Then the stage of his activities widened. He had served a fruitful apprenticeship as a religious broadcaster. He was now the "microphonic apostle." Bigger ideas were hatched in his mind, in his unceasing desire to blot out bigotry and awaken a sleeping public to the evils about them. The glaring cross of religious hate was an indelible mental picture. Familiar with the changing conditions and changing attitudes, brilliant in his political appraisal of cause and effect, cognizant of the follies of the day, appreciative of the reflected predictions of Pope Leo XIII, he ached to take up the cudgels for the masses, to contend vigorously in behalf of labor as against the domineering control of capital.

Some day—soon—he would preach the allegedly "unpreachable" sermon.

To himself he thought:

"What better means than the radio can there be of reaching the multitudes with the teachings of truth and right?"

The implied but unexpressed answer was, of course:

"None."

## CHAPTER XVI

*"In faith and hope the world will disagree,*
*But all mankind's concern is charity."*

—ALEXANDER POPE.

THE church that radio would build began to take form. Late in 1928, Father Coughlin saw his dream rounding out in fulfillment—the fruition of his ambition. To Henry McGill, noted architect, the radio priest confided his vision of a church that would be dedicated to radio, pledged as a national shrine to Saint Therese, and made possible by the charity of millions. With personal specifications for the proposed church, Father Coughlin turned over the project to the architect; then he waited for McGill's drawings and architectural plans. Meanwhile he pictured mentally the National Shrine, a church with a heaven-reaching cross that neither "man nor beast" could "burn down"—a lofty, flame-defying cross on which would be carved the word "Charity." He saw a Charity Crucifixion Tower, mighty and soul-inspiring, bearing the symbol of Catholicism and Christianity—a cross at whichever view the eye was directed to it. He saw in his mind the first radio church of the world to which countless religious refugees would come, and from which the word of God could be sent out to more countless millions. For the time being, however, he contented himself with a vision of just the first unit—The Tower.

Patrick Dennis was handling real estate news for the *Detroit Times,* one of the William Randolph Hearst chain of publications. In casual meeting one day with Dennis, Father Coughlin told him of his plans and intrusted to him the information that the order was already placed in the hands of architect McGill and that the blueprints of the scheduled church would soon be forthcoming. ("Pat," a dynamic little worker, is now radio editor of the same paper, in addition.)

In true newspaper fashion, Dennis listened with attentive interest, but with the customary cynicism of the profession he considered the project "another one's ambitious dream." Enthusiasm for "the things to be" is a rare quality among my colleagues. It was all so visionary and, having a newspaper man's mind, Dennis was more concerned with the concrete. Then again, Dennis knew the Royal Oak pastor only slightly; he was ignorant of his limitless talents and abounding energy and ingenuity. "Pat" knows better now.

"Thanks for letting me know, Father," Dennis smiled his answer to the priest.

However, the newspaper man played safe, as newspapermen usually do, and added:

"When the architect's drawing of the front elevation and floor plans are ready and available, will you please let me know? Telephone me, if you like."

"Why—yes," Father Coughlin answered.

You see—*toujours la politesse.* Then, Dennis promptly forgot about the whole matter. Like most journalistic scribes, "Pat" crossed his bridge of news when he came to it.

But Father Coughlin lived and ate with the proj-

ect. It was the child of his ingenuity and ability, and Charity was its godmother.

In May of that year, the press was referring to the priest as "Father Coughlin, pastor of the renowned Shrine of the Little Flower." That month, Father Coughlin learned poignantly that there were some to whom his sermons of righteousness and of "mercy, piety, and peace" had not reached. Although there had not been, as yet, any publication of the plans of the proposed Charity Crucifixion Tower, vultures preying on the tender sympathies and religious sentiment of men and women made an untimely appearance in Royal Oak. And the priest found it necessary to appeal both to the police and to the Detroit newspapers for aid in apprehending six men, who, armed with religious and church literature, were attempting to solicit funds for the proposed new building. These scheming thieves had approached several members of the parish of the Shrine of the Little Flower, Father Coughlin told the police. He announced that they were "fakes." The priest was not a man to be trifled with. Less than a week later, Father Coughlin decided to make public the plans.

Around nine o'clock one night early in June, Dennis was enjoying—away from the rush and turmoil of the speeding presses and office routine—the quiet leisure of his home. With two others, the real estate editor was working out, seriously, some of the bridge hands evolved from the expertness of R. R. Richards, a "bridge-shark," when the telephone bell rang. Dennis was glad to drop the cards and their trying problem, and answered the call himself. The voice at the other end said:

"This is Father Coughlin of the Shrine of the

Little Flower at Royal Oak. I have all the data and drawings of the Charity Crucifixion Tower. You can break the story as your paper sees fit."

Dennis didn't have an automobile available and Royal Oak at nine o'clock at night seemed an incredible distance. As a newspaper worker he felt slightly uneasy, since there was a possibility—if he didn't go out to the Shrine—of being "scooped" on the story. Although, as "Pat" told the incident, "I still wondered if the story was any good."

As a real estate editor, however, Dennis decided he ought to have the story, "good or bad." But, true to the canons of newspaper veterans, he, too, tried to "get out of work" whenever he could. Subtly he hinted to Father Coughlin the suggestion that maybe he "might like to bring or send it out to me right away." Father Coughlin's answer wasn't at all strange to those who knew him. He had continued from boyhood to be "regular." For all who were his friends so spoke of him in their colloquial glorification of his supreme humanness.

"If you give me the directions and address, I'll be out immediately," the priest replied to Dennis.

Such response nearly bowled "Pat" over. He gripped the receiver more tightly. Even though he hoped for it, it was more than he had expected.

From the Shrine to Dennis' residence it was a distance of about eighteen miles. An hour or so after the telephone communication, Father Coughlin arrived. Dennis and his friends were still trying to decipher the bridge plays when the cleric was admitted. Dennis said Father Coughlin looked tired. However, when the priest saw that the trio were playing bridge, he brightened up and said:

"Don't stop playing. If you have no objections, I'll take the fourth hand."

By the real estate editor's own admission, he and his friends were "would-be bridge players." Naturally, they were pleased to "take a hand" with Father Coughlin. An assistant pastor who had accompanied Father Coughlin was ignorant of the aces, kings, and queens of playing cards and their respective color of spades, hearts, and diamonds. They were just so many unintelligible spots and images on shiny surfaces to him. He sat by and watched. The foursome "went at" the game zealously and the rubbers continued well until half an hour past the midnight bells. Such is the magnetism of the game.

Simply as an aside, though it may or may not have a direct bearing on Father Coughlin's life, it might interest you to know Dennis' recommendation of the priest's bridge game and understanding of cards. Dennis facetiously wondered if the priest would agree with him. Well, Dennis said:

"Father Coughlin is a most likeable person at the table, courteous and always ready for the next hand and the promise it may have in store; plays hard; does not sell out his partner; but if given just a wee bit of encouragement, bids rather recklessly. He plays his cards well, once the bidding is ended."

Shortly before one o'clock, about three hours after the priest's arrival, Father Coughlin and Dennis sat down to a table to discuss what, of course, was the object of the visit. Slave to his addiction, Father Coughlin paced the floor of the room for a little more than an hour and a half, "waving his blueprints and photostatic copies," eloquently picturing the radio church to Dennis. The real estate editor

was secretly ashamed of the skepticism with which he had viewed this man's abilities. Here was no moony dreamer. If it had been once a vision, supposedly reckless and extravagant, the project now sat comfortably in the lap of reality. The sincerity of purpose that had always preluded the achievements of the priest, the easy flow of language which had raised him from the rank and file of preachers, hypnotized the newspaper listener. And this time Dennis listened in earnest.

"The tower will be one hundred and eleven feet in height and thirty feet square, surrounded by an esplanade which will be one hundred and twenty feet in diameter. It will be constructed of granite, marble, stone, and bronze, with flagstone floors inlaid with the flower emblems of the Shrine. The sculpture work, and that is to be one of the outstanding features of the tower, will be done in limestone by the well-known sculptor, René Chanballan of New York City. Towering above the entrance will be a thirty-five foot stone carving of Christ on the Cross. On each side of the tower and below the figure of Christ will be other sculptures of the Blessed Mother, St. John, Mary Magdalene, Longinus, the archangels, and the four evangelists. The size of these carvings will be in proportion to the figure of Christ."

Dennis suddenly became a firm believer in Father Coughlin. Here was a man who could complete tasks that would reduce so many others to ignominious failure. Here was a man with vision and the initiative to give it life. Here was a competent, persevering priest, alive to his opportunities and so religiously imbued that the difficult became easy.

Dennis praised the proposed church. He praised Father Coughlin.

"You'll be the talk of the world when you complete this Charity Crucifixion Tower," Dennis humbly announced.

Father Coughlin looked at him and replied: "I am not building it. Radio and charity are building it."

The next day, Dennis ran the story in the *Detroit Times*. It caused considerable discussion and comment. Since the story was printed under the reporter's name—under his by-line—Dennis was stopped on the street and questioned by innumerable of the curious about Father Coughlin's plans.

"Is he having a dream, 'Pat'?" they demanded to know. "Is he really going through with it?"

And Dennis, who not so many months ago was a bit wary of Father Coughlin's ambitious picturings, at once jumped to his defence. Overnight he had succumbed to the charm of the man and his eloquent sincerity, his modest claim to ability, and his vehement attachment to the singleness of his religious purpose.

Plans of the church proper were to come later.

Work on what was to be one of the most beautiful roadside shrines in the world, started not long after the publication of the plans, in the same month. The original simple-framed church, low-shingled and russet-brown in color, was moved a few hundred feet from its location and placed further down on Woodward avenue. This in order to erect a magnificent Shrine on the spot where not full three years before Father Coughlin had roared his rebellious defiance of the hooded order. In three years the Tower

would be ready and dedicated, at an approximated cost of $500,000, its doors and windows of bronze, and its esplanade attractively landscaped; a mecca for religious tourists, an excursion center for train-loads of sightseers from all parts of the country. Such were the unbelieved possibilities of a simple idea.

It was evident that the one station, WJR, was insufficient to reach the great hordes of people who wanted to hear the priest. The power and efficacy of the instrument of radio had been demonstrated in so short a time; still the people on the fringes of the station, so to speak, were unable to "tune in" on Father Coughlin's golden voice and "golden hour." That fall the cleric and Fitzpatrick went into conference. Father Coughlin wanted more time and more stations by which to extend his message. But he asked for nothing that he could not and would not pay for. He started the season off over WJR, which later in the winter became the key station for a modest hook-up of three radio outlets. Father Coughlin added, with Richards' and Fitzpatrick's help, WMAQ of Chicago and WLW of Cincinnati.

Modest as it was, Father Coughlin now had established his own chain. It was still a feeble blanketing of the country, but to some extent it satisfied the loyal listeners who urged upon the cleric the use of greater facilities by which to reach him. Father Coughlin had fast determined that he would pay for time and cables as he could afford them, and as he could afford it he would expand his radio activities. His policy was this: If he bought his radio time, he could direct the leadership of this hour as he saw fit; if he accepted the slightest gratuitous favor, he

would be under obligations to comply with requests. Father Coughlin was looking ahead to the day of that alleged "unpreachable sermon."

Detroit clergy, as well as the clergy all over the country, of all denominations, had their eyes on the Royal Oak "Shepherd of the Air." He had done what was believed by so many to be the impossible. He had taken a Catholic service and the Gospel of Christ and sent it out over the air in a style and manner that left men and women of no denomination and of all denominations breathlessly anxious for more when he had concluded. Although he stuck very close to religious dogma, it was his expression in terms of human understanding that "put him over."

It is true that he was envied, but what achievement does not carry with it some derogation?

Bishop Gallagher was pleased with the progress of the Royal Oak Shrine of the Little Flower. As far as Father Coughlin was concerned, he was answerable only to his Right Reverend, without whose permission he had never done a single thing.

There was a vicious rumor circulated that Father Coughlin had taken "to the air" in a campaign of religious propaganda to attract and convert listeners to the Faith. This, however, he vehemently denied. Man's ignorance which breeds the most noxious of evils—unfounded gossip, undermining rumor, destructive attack—had jealously failed to comprehend the scope of the priest's sermons that were distinctly rounded out under the thought that:

"Mercy, pity and peace,
Are the world's release."

For those first few years of broadcasting, he made charity—of understanding, of heart, and of religious beliefs—the primary motive of his preachings. His was a plea for religion, whole-hearted acquiescence to religion, "yours and mine." There was no controversial discussion of varied faiths. He emphasized the ultimate failure of the "religious hypocrite" and passionately pleaded for a full one hundred percent obedience to belief in God.

"Don't wear a Sunday coat of religion and a weekday garb of inhumanity," he announced. "I haven't any use for halfway religionists, who are neither one nor the other in their tenets."

His amazing honesty struck a full note of accord in the hearts of his thousands of listeners. His voice, his trilling of the R's, his perfect diction, his bell-like pronunciations, so clear-cut and crystal-like, his dramatic inflections floated one's mind with the rhapsodic melody, "In days of old, when knights were bold, and barons held their sway."

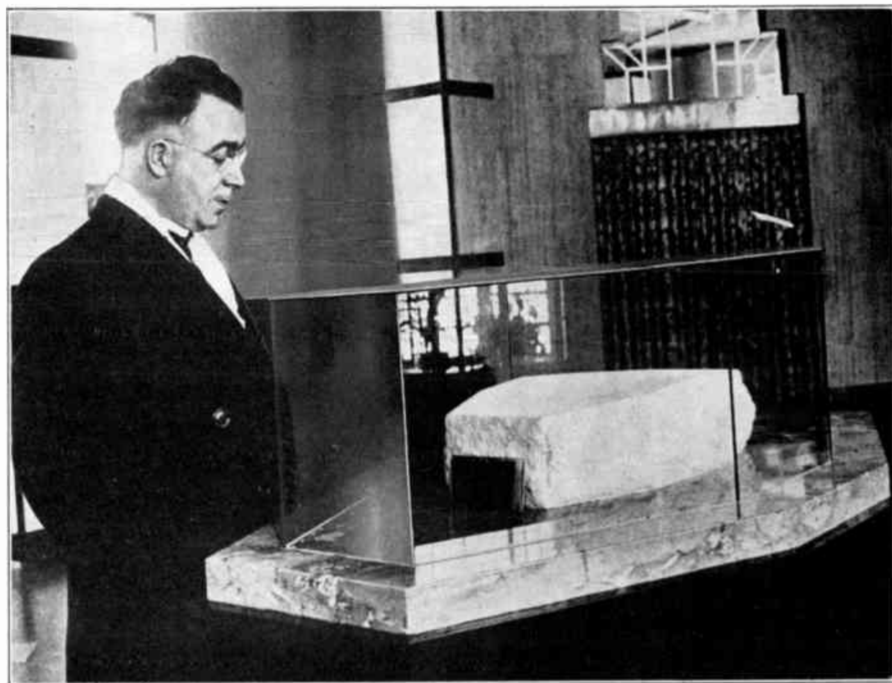
His pronouncement that "Religion is as good on Monday as on Sunday; religion means more than blessing one's self and praying," was a simple statement of unquestioning fact and truth. But, spoken as he spoke the words, they seemed suddenly to assume the proportions of a profound perplexity comparable only to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

He probed humanity to its lowest depths and recorded his findings over the air. He weighed a nation's sufferings and served religious antidotes for their cure. And throughout it all, there gleamed his hope for universal understanding. Jews, Catholics, and Protestants alike found in his simple and direct

appeal to the heart and to the emotions exulting stimulation. The application of charity, sympathy, tolerance, and the common principles of good and moral living were decoratively worded for palatable imbibing.

In analyzing Father Coughlin's artful oratory and glamorous appeal, I like to think of this comparison, homely as it may be. When I enter a restaurant to eat, I think first of its cleanliness, then of its food, and finally of its esthetic sobriety and balm. "One-arm" places or cafeterias, however good, can never appease my sensitive nerves. I like a few bits of parsley to decorate my steak and the frilled white-cap holder for my lamb chop. Softly syncopated rhythm of soothing music unmarked by cymbaled clashings is conducive to my appetite. Clean whiteness of freshly laundered linens adds considerably to palatableness. And withal, I crave wholesome food. Tenderloin steak can taste like the toughened leather of cubed meat when not cooked properly. I feel that, in much the same manner, Father Coughlin served his radio sermons—substantially the white meat of the Gospel to satisfy, artistically, the fastidious taste of religious epicures. For, as the service of culinary preparations is a science, so is the distribution of religion an art of appeal.

He steered clear of tongue-twisting polysyllabic words. He appreciated the means of appeal to the masses. And, "as the greatest only are," he was, "in his simplicity, sublime." He knew no glory save the glory of the Shrine of the Little Flower, and in the steadfast pursuit of preservation of the child-like simplicity of Saint Therese, he kept on as the "intrepid and unselfish warrior."



"A FLAT, WHITE SLAB OF STONE, TAKEN FROM THE HILL OF CALVARY"

On Thanksgiving Day of 1929, visitors and churchgoers to the Shrine of the Little Flower feasted their eyes on a flat, white slab of stone, taken from the hill of Calvary in the Holy Land and sent to Father Coughlin by the Patriarch of Jerusalem via the steamer *Myron*. Temporarily, it was placed in the wooden-framed church. Ultimately it was to be encased in glass and placed in the tower of the new church to stand in the lobby for public inspection. The rectangular piece of masonry reposed in Royal Oak—a marked tribute to the international fame of the man who was once an obscure priest.

With his appearance over his own chain of three stations, Father Coughlin became, on January 12, 1930, a radio crusader against socialism, communism, and kindred fallacious social and economic theories.

"Father Coughlin clicked again," Fitzpatrick reminisced two years later. "There was virility in his sermons—the virility of simplicity. And what a wallop he packed into his religious punch! He is a holy man, as you know, but what a he-man! And such humility. As a man, there is none finer. As a priest —well, his popularity can serve as a testimonial."

Things were beginning to pick up, religiously speaking.

> "I speak truth, not as much as I would, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little the more as I grow older."

Confidently, Father Coughlin dared a little more with the fertile pickings from the political and economic arena. On his religious platform behind the microphone he operated masterfully on the cancerous ailments of a nation. He instituted a series of

radio diagnoses of the systems under which the millions, to whom he addressed himself, lived. However, his attack was simply a cursory reference. He expected his unseen audience to read between the lines. The time was not yet ripe to deliver the "unpreachable sermon." Insidious forces were in a malignant stage. Their cancerous seizure was just poisonously beginning to permeate a nation's body. Quietly, without the aid of newspaper trumpet and fanfare, without publicity, simply by the force of his radio personality and sermons, he had built up a reputation of public acclaim. He was beginning to stamp himself on the national consciousness of America. He was now considered a man of dominant importance whose persuasive air talks were moulding the consciousness of thought of millions. Multitudes ravenously devoured his words with the relish of the famished. Depression, lecherously creeping into the lives of the masses to rob them of their livelihood and their bread, their peace of mind, and their happiness, was sadly but surely giving birth to radical thinking and radical leadership.

Although he began by exempting all controversial subjects from his broadcasts, now he took up the causes expressed in Pope Leo's enunciations. He included in his Sunday messages the highlights of the papal dissertations on "rationalism, materialism, and atheism, have begotten socialism, communism, and nihilism—fatal and pestilential evils. . . ."

For two months, from January 12 to March 9, 1930, Father Coughlin preached excoriating sermons on the wrongs born of socialism and communism. He did this, of course, with the full and com-

plete sanction of his Bishop. "Happy he with such a Bishop."

The priest's attacks against socialism and socialists incited the wrath of the Socialist Party and the displeasure of Norman Thomas, presidential candidate of the party in 1928, who as chairman of the Socialist Party public affairs committee, sought redress in a letter sent to Senator James Couzens of Michigan, chairman of the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee.

That May, Father Coughlin was embroiled in a controversy, which concerned both him and Station WJR—a controversy publicized in the press.

Thomas charged that he and the Socialist Party were discriminated against by Station WJR and refused permission to answer directly the allegedly unwarranted attack of Father Coughlin made over the same station. The contents of correspondence between Thomas and Senator Couzens, when made public on May 12 by Fitzpatrick, revealed the bitter resentment of the Socialist Party against the Royal Oak priest's "serious misrepresentation of the nature of socialism and the Socialist Party and hopeless confusion of it with communism."

Thomas charged that Father Coughlin had "attacked me by name."

Since it was a directed charge of discrimination against the station, Father Coughlin sat by and made no comments whatsoever. Fitzpatrick, as station manager, talked for WJR and indirectly for the Royal Oak priest; Thomas defended the rights of the Socialist Party. He admitted that an appeal to the federal radio commission had failed to settle the question whether the commission had power to deal

with "such gross discrimination," according to the complaining letter sent to the Michigan Senator.

In part, Thomas' letter stated:

"This station, which calls itself the 'Good Will' station, on Sundays from January 12 to March 9, broadcast sermons by Rev. Charles E. Coughlin. He indulged in serious misrepresentation of the nature of socialism and the Socialist Party and hopeless confusion of it with communism. He has attacked me by name.

"But this letter is not about Father Coughlin, with whom I am in correspondence and which may, perhaps, have satisfactory results. It is rather about station WJR which refused me an opportunity to reply to these attacks.

"It did, indeed, permit me to speak on the usual financial terms, but it forced the Socialist representatives in Detroit to accept as a condition of getting the use of the station an extraordinary provision in which 'Mr. Thomas and our organization (the Socialist Party) agree not to enter into any direct controversy with any other organization or individual, especially, we agree to make no reply to Father Coughlin or the Catholic Church.' Hence, I raise the question with you both as regards the adequacy of the present law and the possibility of more adequate protection for individuals and organizations thus misrepresented over the radio.

"It is not enough that we have the right to sue for slander. Radio is a public utility. It is under far greater obligation than a magazine or newspaper to permit reply to attacks that may be made on individuals or organizations because it enjoys the use, by public license, of wave lengths that cannot be privately owned. . . . "

Fitzpatrick denied that any discrimination against the party or its leaders existed, but said in a prepared statement to the press that the regular rules forbidding speakers to enter into controversy had been applied.

"We told Mr. Thomas that he was at perfect liberty to eulogize Socialism to any extent and to explain its distinction from communism," said Fitzpatrick, "but we could not permit him to attack the Catholic Church or Father Coughlin personally . . . it was pointed out verbally to his representatives that the station could not encourage nor permit embittered invective and controversial denunciation. . . . I do not believe Father Coughlin had made any personal attack on Mr. Thomas, and it would not be good policy to permit a man who was making one appearance only to attack an established program. Father Coughlin has been a feature of WJR for more than three years."

Fitzpatrick pointed out that discussions of social or economic theories were not banned or taboo. Experience had taught managers of radio stations, however, Fitzpatrick concluded, not to permit attacks on any kinds of religion.

This was the first time that Father Coughlin's veracity and accuracy of facts and statements made over the air had been challenged. While it did not impair his fighting spirit—enhanced it rather—it, however, cramped his style for the moment. For with the publication of the pros and cons of the Socialist controversy, Fitzpatrick also announced that Father Coughlin had been requested to refrain from mentioning the Socialist Party again in any

way that would give rise to controversy. And Father Coughlin agreed.

However, from January to March he had ripped open wide the doors of spreading communism and laid bare the causal forces. To a sentient public it was ordained reclamation.

He had succeeded in circulating his message and the reflected truth of Pope Leo XIII. Government officials began to sit up and take notice. Here was an obscure priest, whose mind was filled to overflowing with facts and statistics about the apprehensive and increased activities of communistic forces, telling a nation's people the surrounding evils that threatened to "uproot the foundation of civilized society at large."

Again, Father Coughlin had taken for the basis of his discourses the essence of an encyclical letter issued from the Vatican by Pope Leo on December 28, 1878, under the heading, "Concerning Modern Errors."

Pope Leo, who urged upon the "Venerable Brothers" to whom his encyclical was addressed, " . . . the prophet resounding as it were in our ears: 'Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,' " again gave papal approval to the radio pleadings of the Royal Oak cleric.

Pope Leo, in this encyclical, made Socialist practically synonymous with Communist.

His letter stated in part:

" . . . that sect of men who, under the motley and all but barbarous terms and titles of Socialists, Communists, and Nihilists, are spread abroad throughout the world and bound intimately together in baneful alliance, no longer look for strong support in secret meetings held in darksome places, but, standing

forth openly and boldly in the light of day, strive to carry out the purpose, long resolved upon, of uprooting the foundations of civilized society at large. These are they in very truth who, as the sacred text bears witness, 'defile the flesh, and despise dominion, and blaspheme majesty.' They leave nothing scathless or uninjured of that which human and divine laws alike have wisely ordained to ensure the preservation and honour of life. . . .

"In short, spurred on by greedy hankering after things present, which is 'the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith,' they attack the right of property, sanctioned by the law of nature; and with signal depravity, while pretending to feel solicitous about the needs, and to be anxious to satisfy the requirements of all, they strain every effort to seize upon and hold in common all that has been individually acquired by title of lawful inheritance, through intellectual or manual labor, or economy in living. . . .

"These monstrous views they proclaim in public meetings, uphold in booklets and spread broadcast everywhere through daily press. Hence the hallowed dignity and authority of rulers have incurred such odium on the part of rebellious subjects that evil-minded traitors, spurning all control, have many a time within a recent period boldly raised impious hands against even the very heads of States. . . . Such daring conduct on the part of disloyal individuals, which threatens the civilized community from day to day with even graver perils and troubles the mind of all with anxious fears, draws its cause and origin from those venomous teachings which, like pernicious seed scattered far and wide among the nations, have produced in course of time death-bearing fruit. . . . With such doctrines spread far and wide, and such license in thought and action, it is no wonder that

men of the most lowly condition, heart-sick of a humble home or poor workshop, should fix eager eyes on the abodes and fortunes of the wealthy; no wonder that tranquillity no longer prevails in public or private life, or that the human race has been hurried onward to well-nigh the verge of ruin. . . . They (Socialists) in good sooth cease not from asserting . . . that all men are by nature equal, and hence they contend that neither honour nor respect is owed to public authority, nor any obedience to the laws, saving perhaps to those which have been sanctioned according to their good pleasure. . . . For the Socialists wrongly assume the right of property to be of mere human invention, repugnant to the natural equality between men; and, preaching the community of goods, declare that no one should endure poverty meekly, and that all may with impunity seize upon the possessions and usurp the rights of the wealthy. More wisely and profitably, the Church recognizes the existence of inequality amongst men who are by nature unlike in mental endowment and strength of body, and even in amount of fortune, and she enjoins that the right of property and of its disposal, derived from nature, should in the case of every individual remain intact and inviolate. . . . Moreover, she (the Church) lays the rich under strict command to give of their superfluity to the poor, impressing them with fear of the divine judgement, which will exact the penalty of eternal punishment unless they succour the wants of the needy. . . ."

Therein, Father Coughlin found the nucleus for his sermons on social evils. He discovered that in the twentieth century, the words of the Pontiff were equally as applicable to the rotting civilization of a machinized humanity as they were a century before. If his manner of presentation was astounding and

extremely modernized and, as some firmly believed, conducive to greater social unrest—since a man of the cloth had a greater opportunity of expression and impression upon a plastic people—Father Coughlin again found consolation in the fact that he was subservient only to the command of Bishop Gallagher. But in him he had a staunch defender, a keen admirer, and an able supporter. From the beginning of the broadcasts, Father Coughlin and his Right Reverend were in weekly conference, reviewing the next radio sermon. To Bishop Gallagher, the priest outlined explicitly the embodied principles of the following broadcast.

What Pope Leo wanted, a priest could do under the circumstances of twentieth century progress.

## CHAPTER XVII

*"A charge to keep I have,*
*A God to glorify;*
*A never dying soul to save,*
*And fit it for the sky."*

—CHARLES WESLEY.

BECAUSE of his series of radio talks on Communism, Father Coughlin was summoned to appear before a Congressional Committee of five United States Congressmen, investigating the Soviet activities in the Detroit area. The hearing, a two-day session, opened July 25 in the Federal Building in the automobile city, and was presided over by the chairman of the committee, Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr., of New York. Representative Fish, known some twenty years ago as "Ham Fish," captain of the Harvard Varsity gridiron squad and an ace football tackle, was now the most active member in the House in the fight against the Reds. He would find, therefore, in Father Coughlin a great ally, for both had this common interest. The holders of court included also Carl G. Bachmann of West Virginia, Judge Robert S. Hall of Mississippi, Judge Edward E. Eslick of Tennessee, and John Nelson of Maine. Two stenographers, sergeant-at-arms J. C. Rodgers, assistant sergeant-at-arms P. H. Crooks, and W. L. Reynolds, clerk in the House, accompanied the Congressional party. Hearings had been held in Washington, D. C., and in New York City, where, for ten

days, the national legislators had sat in listening attentiveness to the enthusiastic recitals of the testimony givers who pictured the encompassing evils of the sprouted Communist roots. The political leaders were to continue to Chicago at the conclusion of their Michigan survey; revealing, thereby, that their investigation was of nation-wide scope. Held to determine the facts concerning the frightening and apprehensive reports of the mushroom uprising of Communist and Red radicalism in various industrial centers of the country, the meetings were to serve as basis for action, preliminary to the formulation of national legislation.

Father Coughlin, in his air talks, had—among other enumerations of statistics and facts, bolstering his belief of the extension of Communist trouble—expressed great and grave presentiment over the future Red activities. Therefore, it was fitting that he be summoned to testify. And he came willingly and anxiously before the investigating body, to place before them the situation as he viewed it and as he had contended prevalently existed; hoping, in some event, that concrete opposition would be prescribed against these "fatal and pestilential evils," and the power of the Department of Justice strengthened. He appeared at the opening session, one of eleven, to give testimony pertinent to the issue. Of all those first-day witnesses, only Father Coughlin, however, expressed disquieting anticipation over future Communist agitation. Caesar J. Scavarda, police chief of Flint, Michigan; Flloyd R. Alspaugh, police chief of Pontiac; and Louis Flint, executive vice-president of the Detroit Citizens' Committee were among those who testified. Also N. F. Daugherty, person-

nel director of the General Motors Corporation, reviewed the labor trouble at Flint. None, however, save the Royal Oak priest, "made" the news columns of the country's metropolitan dailies with their testimony.

Crowds gathered at the Federal Building to see Father Coughlin, the man; to get a close-up view of the fiery crusader of the air. Crowds gathered inside the building to cheer him as he passed quickly into the session-chamber.

And as he passed, he caught sight of stickers pasted on the walls of the first floor of the building; these read:

"Uphold the Soviet Union."

There was defiance of the Soviet-minded that could not be denied. The stickers, it was explained, had been glued to the walls during the night by the arrogant adherents of Communism.

Father Coughlin was much heavier-set than in previous years, but he still was the fastidiously garbed, well-tailored cleric with full face, piercing eyes, and stately carriage. A wistfulness, however, played around his mouth, that betokened pensive fatigue. When he entered the room, he saw that the questioners sat in friendly grouping at a long solid-looking table, much as a master in chancery sits at an informal court hearing. At a near-by, smaller table sat members of the press. At one end of the table, the witness chair was placed, that the Congressmen might look squarely and directly into the face of the testifier. Father Coughlin was called and took the seat. Then Representative Fish asked him to explain the basis for his reasoning and to give the

"THE FASTIDIOUSLY GARBED, WELL-TAILORED CLERIC"

sources of the facts that he had quoted over the air.

"Gladly," answered the cleric.

He drew closer to the table, leaned over its shiny surface, folded his arms, and began clearly:

"The greatest force in the movement to internationalize labor throughout the world is Henry Ford."

Newspapermen covering the assignment wrote feverishly, continually wetting their pencils to keep pace with the rapid flow of the priest's testimony. It was an unlooked for and unexpected accusation and Father Coughlin was urged by the committee chairman to explain further his deduction.

Calmly, he continued:

"A year ago, on the eve of the Automobile Show in New York, Mr. Ford issued a statement that was printed on the front page of every daily newspaper in the United States, that he required 30,000 more workers at his plant in Detroit. As a result of that statement, more than 30,000 men who were out of work flocked to Detroit from Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, and other southern states, and, while the weather was at zero, stood in front of the Ford plant trying to get those jobs. There were no jobs for them, and the only redress they had was to have a fire hose turned on them to drive them away."

The committee drew closer to the table. But the cleric wasn't finished. He continued to say, in substance, that such action at the manufacturing plant of a leading capitalist would tend to embitter laborers against all capitalists and incite them to listen to the teachings of Communism.

Chairman Fish narrowed his eyes and interrupted with this query:

"Getting all those men here in that manner was not done on purpose, was it?"

"No, it was done through ignorance, just as the peace ship was sent to Europe through ignorance by the same man who didn't know when the War of Independence was fought," the priest answered directly.

Father Coughlin continued, in his testimony, to mention the $13,000,000 contract signed by Henry Ford with representatives of the Soviet government, inferring that by so doing, the automobile magnate was aiding the spread of Communism unwittingly, and abetting its intensity unconsciously. However, it was only an intimation.

The press, nevertheless, picked up the testimony of the Royal Oak radio priest and featured it throughout the country's newspapers. Editors headlined Father Coughlin's criticism of Henry Ford. The bold-faced type of journalistic make-up informed a reading and inquisitive public that the priest:

"Blames Ford for Red Flare."

"Accuses Ford of Spreading Communism; Priest Cites One Case Where Thousands Failed to Get Jobs in Auto Plant."

"Says Ford Is Helping Communism But Doing It 'Through Ignorance,' Declares Detroit Priest."

So ran the news of the nation's dailies.

Father Coughlin was no reformer, however. He merely considered himself an instrument of God, disseminator of Christian principles, ordained to tear to shreds the veil behind which America's leaders

and America's failing social and economic systems were playing hide and seek in a losing game with truth. Father Coughlin saw facts as they actually were, and he was unafraid to face them. He wanted the world to do the same—particularly, the "land of the free and the home of the brave." From those fortunate to have authoritative control, he expected especial cognizance of the insidious forces. His appeal was a sincere cry, doubters to the contrary, that the world be made a better place that humanity might have a better chance to live and enjoy life. If in his enthusiasm he entertained the extravagant idealism of a Utopian universe, remotely attainable under the deficiencies of human nature, nevertheless, by his poignantly worded contrast of reality and hope he was awakening a lethargic mankind with vigorous rubbing and a sharp, bitter eye-wash. Millions liked their medicine and opened wide their eyes to the liquid remedies of the priest's eye-cup. And they dug out their ears, to hear more distinctly his false-proof charges against men and methods. Add, then, to his life, the fearlessness of meeting all "showdowns." He stood—a symbol for leadership and a symbol for truth.

Christ said:

"The truth shall make you free."

Remember, always, that Father Coughlin is a son of Christ, satellite of his teachings.

That this was an age of man crying out for authoritative and ordained denunciation of wrongs—of people, of systems, of relationships, and of governments—is beside the point. The undeniable fact remains that the priest was expressing the latent sentiments of a nation's bewildered millions—sentiments

and reflections which rankled in their minds and played with their emotions, and about which they could do no more than mutter feebly to each other. If he wore the biretta and the cassock of the priesthood, so much the better. He spoke, privileged, as one designated by the Divine Power. Maybe he was a modern Messiah. However, who he was or what he was mattered not as much as that he spoke the truth, substantiated his allegations, and quoted unimpeachable facts.

The answer to his appeal was told in the necessity to increase the clerical force of the Shrine of the Little Flower to a staff of forty young women, who from eight to twelve hours a day, were beaverishly engaged in opening, sorting, and answering correspondence induced by the Radio League of the Little Flower. Two of the Franciscan Fathers of St. John the Baptist Province—Father John de Deo, a young, strapping man, and Father Reginald—assisted Father Coughlin in the work of the Shrine and lived with him in the modest bungalow that was their rectory, not many yards distant from the church. Father de Deo directed the music.

The next month, Father Coughlin took a trip to New York. None save his associates at the Shrine, Richards (independent owner of WJR and protestant), and Leo Fitzpatrick, station manager, knew the real motive behind the trip. The radio priest had wisely refrained from making public his plans until they had been made and sealed. As he sat in the plush comfort of an eastward-bound train, he thought of the last few years and the remarkable change that time had wrought. Of a natural, philosophic bent, he was inclined to lose himself con-

stantly in reflections. From a parish of thirty-two families it was now a parish of twice that number—humble, middle-class people who had acquiesced graciously to his definition of service. On the shoulders of this small handful of parishioners, rested the confidence by which he was undertaking gigantic projects. On them, he could count one hundred percent. The admiration of his outside public, despite the fact that its numbers scaled dizzily into the millions, could easily change with the whims and fancies of man's fickleness. As a "new herald," whom radio made possible, he was dependent on the constancy of the public's appreciative interest and unwaning endorsement. Fluctuation would indicate disfavor and disapproval. Of this Father Coughlin was fully aware. He knew the limit of his radio service and he wasn't closing his mind to the possibilities of discontinuance. Check up to his credit the ability to appraise limitations. He had maintained that America's economic conditions were breeding Communism—one of the first clergymen to do so—and his radio discourses were directed to the sole purpose of choking the growth of radicalism. He knew what he was talking about. There was very little that passed his vision and came within his hearing that he did not weigh, evaluate, and judge. But back of it all, of course, were his boiling emotions of sympathy with the poor. The tiny parish of his little church had contributed to the Community Fund, to the St. Vincent de Paul organization, and to all other poor funds, that, in destitution, had established claim to the treasury.

He had witnessed depression, the by-product of an unsound economic system, surge from a choppy

sea on a breaking wave of prosperity to rock perilously the impoverished poor who timorously sat on its tidal crest. He had seen loaves of bread dwindle down to crumbs, and those crumbs so sparsely scattered over the cupboards of the land that not even a handful could be fine-combed from the sweepings for human hunger. He thought resentfully, bitterly, of the false promise of a Republican leader, President Herbert Hoover: "A chicken in every pot." All around him he saw the spectral hand of poverty with its skeleton fingers outstretched from the emaciated bodies of the weeping, wailing poor.

The train sped over the rails. The face of the man looked out over the barren wastes.

"Would that mankind could speed as fast over the blank despondency of a jobless era," he thought.

In defense of the continued existence of the masses, of the "poor that we always have with us" and of the "poor newly born of depression," he was making this trip to New York. If he was eagerly anticipant of the outcome of his mission, it was not the pleasurable contentment of achievement that had placed the look of longing hope in his eyes. Rather, it was joy tinged with sadness—the unhappy happiness of a golden beaker filled with tears, the tears of God's poor.

Many millions had "tuned" in on the Golden Hour of the Shrine of the Little Flower. Now there was the possibility that countless other millions would be able to welcome the Golden Hour into their homes on a Sunday, to hear Father Coughlin plead for the restoration of employment and against the political strategy of conniving capitalists that would make of such seriousness a punted football.

One of the first "out-siders" to know that Father

Coughlin was to take to the air nationally, was my friend, Pat Dennis, who was in New York at the same time on a special assignment from the *Detroit Times*. Pat was in his hotel room, pounding away at his portable typewriter, hurrying to catch the wires for an early edition of his paper, when a loud knock at the door broke the trend of his thought. Pat, none too happy about admitting visitors while he was in the throes of his story, answered coldly and bluntly:

"Who's there?"

Refusing, you see, to admit a stranger before acquainting himself with his identity. Colleagues, pleasure-bent, might attempt to dissuade him from his labors. And Pat was human, though not too susceptible.

"Father Coughlin," came the answer, brightly.

Pat was surprised. He was unaware of the priest's presence in New York. Father Coughlin entered the room beaming, his full face a wreath of smiles. The priest and the newspaper man were now firm friends. In Dennis, Father Coughlin knew that he had an honest "booster." When the preliminaries of greeting were over, Dennis asked to be excused for a bit and resumed the writing of his "yarn." Father Coughlin began to pace the floor—smile and pace, pace and smile. For a while Dennis said nothing and left the cleric to his ways. He was familiar with the expression of deep thought manifested in the pacing of the man. Finally, when Pat could no longer contain himself, he dropped the story and pleaded:

"For the love of silence, quit that pacing. You're driving me goofier than is my usual custom."

Father Coughlin laughed aloud and sat down.

"Out with it, Father," Dennis began. "Something's on your mind—something exciting. What is it?"

Now—Pat was interested. Maybe it was a good story—maybe just a friendly visit. At any rate, talking to the priest was always an inspiration.

"Well, Pat," Father Coughlin confided, "I have just been talking to broadcasting officials. . . . Don't be surprised if you hear that the Golden Hour of the Shrine of the Little Flower goes on a nation-wide hook-up. . . . "

This was news—big news—a scoop for the Detroit newspaper man. At once he became the absorbing inquirer. And he learned that Father Coughlin's Sunday sermons would now be available to two continents of listeners through the facilities of eighteen stations. The new venture, added to other indebtedness, approximated a burden of about $300,000, or a weekly expenditure in excess of $10,000. His vigorous radio protest against the growth of Communism in America had "put him over," so to speak. A weekly average of about 15,000 letters had acclaimed his attack and given him renewed courage and faith to continue as he had begun. He had faith, but these expressions of concurring sentiment had given him added faith in the service he was rendering. And for all these thousands, voluntary contributions would stand the burden.

Upon his return to Royal Oak, Father Coughlin announced that his broadcasts would be sent over the Columbia Broadcasting system, with station WXYZ as the key station. Included in the hook-up of stations would be WABC of New York, WCAU of

Philadelphia and their short-wave stations which broadcast to the whole world, WCCO of Minneapolis-St. Paul, WGR of Buffalo, and WFBL of Syracuse. This meant that forty millions of people could now receive Father Coughlin's sermons over the air. On Sunday evening, October 5, 1930, at seven o'clock, he embarked on his career as national broadcaster. For twenty-five weeks he would deliver his messages from the key station to resound in the homes of the country as the endowed words of the "microphonic apostle."

Three weeks after the first national broadcast, it was certain and assuringly indicative that Father Coughlin was a national figure. The staff of the Shrine, which now numbered fifty-five clerks and stenographers, would have to be increased to an even hundred before another full moon. The week-day labors of the employed of the Shrine began to assume the proportions of "big business." Reprints of sermons would entail endless labor and at once Father Coughlin negotiated with the Detroit post office for the expedient and facilitated handling of Shrine correspondence. In addition, he continued to broadcast on Sunday afternoons between three and four o'clock over the local station, WJR, a "Children's Catechism"—an enjoyable hour that he had conducted from the beginning of his radio career.

Father Coughlin's re-introduction to the radio world on October 5 came by way of a message titled, "Charity—the Policy of Christ," in which he discoursed on the substitution, by an industrial world, of political economy for Christian charity. He continued to verbally horsewhip the new science of the twentieth century economics. He had lost none of

his previous fire, none of his dramatic appeal, none of his ability in meting out the cold, hard facts of a nation's housekeeping. In his temporary quarters at the simple-framed church, he was building up a reference file of invaluable statistics and material, a library that could easily rival the most modern and complete "morgue" of a metropolitan newspaper. And all this literature was encased in steel. Father Coughlin still was not taking any chances.

When I saw and talked with him for several hours at a time, on different days for some weeks, he facetiously called himself a "religious Walter Winchell."

"I have friends all over the country sending me material and facts and information," he told me. "And all this data I safely file away for future reference."

If you have wondered at his amazing wealth of reference material, the answer is in the aforementioned item. I would hardly dare to speak of the eminent radio priest and the Broadway columnist in the same breath, were it not for the fact that Father Coughlin so named himself.

At the conclusion of his October 26 broadcast, he announced, in passing, that while he had neither dollars nor employment nor food to offer the poor, he did have a full supply of clothes to distribute—theirs for the asking—which would keep their bodies warm during the cold of the approaching winter. This wearing apparel had, at his suggestion, been brought to the church by kind neighbors and the members of his church.

The next morning was swept by cold winds and the desolate dampness of a drizzling rain, making that dismal fall Monday in keeping with the low-

FATHER COUGHLIN'S HOME AT ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN

spirited hearts and minds of the jobless and hungry. Men, women, and children, all needy—most of them in the torn tatters of their diminished circumstances—surrounded the modest rectory in search of the comforting garments Father Coughlin had promised. They came in that rain to solicit assistance from one whose service was synonymous with charity. They were not of his parish. Many of them were those who four years ago had come to scoff. To-day they came to pray and receive. And to all, with unquestioning belief, the priest gave unreservedly.

Out of this gesture was organized God's Poor Society, which not long afterwards occupied a separate building across the road from the Shrine, where hundreds of persons, unable to find employment, were fed and given clothes and assisted in paying their rent. Within a short distance of the Shrine there was acute want. And Father Coughlin stretched out a helping hand to reach them and make their meager lives a bit happier and a bit more comfortable. The virtue of charity—inculcated upon him in childhood when he gave the suit of clothes off his back to the little boy who had less—he demonstrated in full grown manhood as well.

The next Sunday, the priest in his "Thought for the Week—Multiplications of the Loaves," reviewed the incident. If Father Coughlin may be considered too impressionable, too susceptible to the drama and tragedy of life, all I can say is: Would that the world were congestedly inhabited with such impressionable men. If one argues that charity is part of a priest's concern, then I refuse to answer.

In recognition of the greater need of service to the poor on the part of all churches, Father Coughlin

during that broadcast publicly pledged $500 to the St. Vincent de Paul organization, to which philanthropic body he had been making steady contributions in the past. He announced over the air that the next day, Monday, he would forward a check for that amount in the name of the Shrine of the Little Flower. At the same time, he urged that the churches of America emulate the service of the Franciscan Fathers of New York and of Cincinnati, to meet in some measure the growing needs of the increasing needy. He denied that any drama was attached to his gesture. He was simply facing facts. The press, however, again featured his offer and played up in headlines his generous contribution. From a church and parish, burdened with an approximate debt of $300,000, giving such a sum was an inspiring act.

Father Coughlin was feeling the pulse of the people with the contents of the more than 300,000 letters which came to his office. It was openly admitted by radio officials throughout the country that he was receiving the greatest and most enthusiastic response ever accorded a broadcaster. In the parlance of the theatre, the priest was giving the public "what it wanted." But add to that—what it needed! The summary of the mail bags assured the pastor that the hearts of the American people were sound. It also furnished the troubling information that many of the laboring classes were prone to the delusion that "the churches are the pawns of capitalists and of the agents of wealth."

In his sermon of the first Sunday night in November, he discredited the belief. Quoting from his re-

ported radio talk in the November third edition of the *Detroit Times,* he said:

"Honest criticism, however, is always honestly accepted. Dishonest propaganda must be frowned upon. I ask you, therefore, to credit me with that amount of truthfulness which is devoid of both weak sentimentality and intentional exaggeration, when I pass on to you the fact of the existence of this growing mental attitude of the poor and of the working class towards our churches. We who have learned the meaning of mercy, as enunciated by Jesus, must begin to practice our learning to-day. Unless we do this, sentiment will grow until its force is destructive to both religion and politics."

He further decried the efforts of politicians to make unemployment a political issue. That there were dissenters from his views on social and economic problems, those who did not sanction a radio pulpit of Christ, was revealed by Father Coughlin nine weeks after his initial appearance on a nation-wide hook-up. And the matter bothered him. At the very outset of his talk, appreciating what he called the "privilege" of the Golden Hour to broadcast, he explained that in conducting these discussions, it was done "not with any erratic idea of degrading this pulpit into a political arena" (which quotation I take from the press clippings).

Although millions were being entertained and enlightened by his discourses, none the less considerable debating and argumentative questioning were fostered in various circles, including church circles, as to the propriety of Father Coughlin's probing of social and government ills and fallacies which undermine a people's happiness. But again he could point to

the approval of his bishop. And again he could satisfactorily point to Pope Leo, who in the summary and conclusion of his encyclical, "Rerum Novarum," urged:

"Let this be carefully taken to heart by those whose office it is to safeguard the public welfare. Every minister of holy religion must bring to the struggle the full energy of his mind and all his power of endurance."

As the weeks went on, Father Coughlin "dared a little more" in adding meat to his sermons. Though at this time he expressed a preference to remain silent on the "noble experiment," despite the thousands of requests that poured into the Shrine office begging him for such a critique (later he did, however), Father Coughlin became more vitriolic in his attack on the underlying causes of unemployment, denouncing Washington's "political game of tag." He pierced fallacious theories as a St. Michael's collegiate; as a nationally known radio priest, he pierced to the core fallacious systems affecting "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." There was no release from his work. The momentum of a country's applause pushed him onward. His crusading messages clung to the hearts of men as Dejanira's shirt adhered to his body. He asked for no glory, though he was helpless to refuse recognition.

Titles came to him, titles of acclaim from the people and from the press—"Shepherd of the Air," "Militant Crusader," "Daring Apostle of the Truth," "Fearless Radio Priest," "The Champion of the Under-dog." And it was obvious, indeed, that the "under-dog" was sorely in need of a champion

and a friend. These titles singled him out until his name became a household by-word. And throughout it all, Father Coughlin remained modest, with continued unsparing of his energies. His task had only begun.

Friends came to him and told him he was working too hard, that he was laying himself open to the unfriendly gestures of his criticizers. But he replied simply:

"I am selling service and truth—service to God and truth to the people. I am obeying Pope Leo's edict, with the help of Bishop Gallagher, commanding a priest to concern himself with the social influences which affect the lives of men and women of a nation."

At this time he was little affected by current criticism. Later he was.

There is one thing I have tried to stress in the telling of this story—that is, his obstinate perseverance after accomplishment. He had a purpose; he has always had a purpose; and a purpose must be achieved. The letters he received—letters from persons in every walk of life, the richest and the poorest, educated and ignorant, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—were gratifying testimonials of the partial success of his mission. I like to think of this story as a story of a man's mind, rather than of a man's exciting activities; to me, the key to endeavor and to achievement is written in one's courage and intelligence.

During these weeks, Father Coughlin was living very simply. With the onrush of "fan" mail and the arduous pouring over textbooks, Congressional records, religious matter, newspapers, and other written

material, there was precious little time left for company with his parents. They had moved to Detroit to be near him, but, alas, they saw only fleeting shadows of his solid frame as he dashed in and out of the Hogarth avenue house in active pursuit. For the first three days of the week, there was the routine matter of the Shrine that had to be cared for. Thursday and Friday meant preparation for the following Sunday's sermon. Saturday was spent in pleasant conference with Bishop Gallagher, to whom he outlined the meat of his discourse, in addition to the devotionals that must be held on that day. And on Sunday, well—there simply wasn't any time at all for the man. Needless to say, the life of a priest is not an easy one. But the life of Father Coughlin was made more complex by his universally scattered radio congregation. One thing pleased the priest—one thing, especially, taken from all his labors: the thought that, in a small way, he had broken down the barriers of religious misunderstanding. The influx of mail proved that point to him. At this time, at least one-half of the money contributions made to the Shrine were being made by Protestants. The Jews were donating a large share, those of his own faith, the rest. It all demonstrated to him that men and women, believing in their own religion and in their own God, could, however, believe in the discourses of a Catholic. That was a triumph, to be sure. Rabbis held high praise for him; Protestants concurred in his social and economic views; Catholics, naturally, adored him. Is it any wonder that Bishop Gallagher permitted him to go on?

With the close of 1930, skies were darker and cloudier than ever. Breadlines were being added to

MAIL FROM HIS VAST UNSEEN AUDIENCE

the cares of cities and towns, and throughout the country the black pall of fear and hunger hovered close to the horizon. Father Coughlin prayed for the passing of "godless days" and for a regenerated era of labor. Give every man a chance to work, he pleaded. Then he quoted his favorite Bible quotation from the Scriptures:

"Thou shalt earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow."

To this thought he remained ever true, in his radio talks and in his personal life.

For thirteen weeks he stood behind the microphone, decrying the festering ills of a sick country. With the new year came the desire to preach the "unpreachable sermon"—to disrobe the draped, masquerading impersonator of prosperity, to expose her disguise and to impeach her seducers.

The Charity Crucifixion Tower was slowly rising—a testimonial to the sanction of millions whose generosity continued to grow with appreciation.

## CHAPTER XVIII

> *"The humblest citizen of all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause is stronger than all the hosts of Error."*
>
> —WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN.

FOR the first sermon of the new year, Father Coughlin announced as his subject, "Prosperity," and intimated the promise of verbal pyrotechnics. He was, without doubt, the country's most striking speaker. The promised sermon, therefore, savored of spicier content and unprecedented license. A great many dissenters, however, badly melodizing the "my country, right or wrong, my country" jingle in a minor key of discordant unconcern for hoi polloi, considered the contemplated discourse "too close to dynamite." And without much delay they expressed themselves in hurried complaints to their local station, urging that the priest's air talk be throttled. Two such stations, at least—WCCO of Minneapolis-St. Paul and WGR of Buffalo of the chain—in no uncertain terms accepted the complaints of their listeners and passed along the protests to Columbia Broadcasting headquarters in New York. Other sources influenced Washington to bring pressure to bear on the Columbia Broadcasting officials. And they, subservient to the idea of clamping down the lid on the priest's revelations, submitted to the steam-roller compulsion ordered by the mouthpiece for the leaders of the national capital.

Father Coughlin's addresses on unemployment were bitter enough in their disagreement with existing conditions. Certain political and financial leaders, wearing lead-weighted hats of guilt, resorted to extraneous efforts in an attempt to stifle any discussion of the touchy and highly-charged subject of prosperity by the militant cleric of the air. By the grape-vine method, rumor spread to the man in the street—to the masses—that a secret conference had been held at Washington, at which the radio activities of the priest were discussed. From the Columbia headquarters in New York, the monitor wires to Detroit burned with instruction to Father Coughlin that in the future he "temper and restrain" his remarks. For the second time, the "militant crusader" rebelled. If before he was feared by those vested with capital and power, he knew that now he was dreaded. Of his fight for truth, the priest made a determined issue.

Was speech in America to be free or throttled?

Was an individual entitled to his constitutional rights or was he simply an "extra" in a travesty on justice?

Therefore Father Coughlin announced to his radio audience on January 4—the scheduled date of the prosperity sermon—a change of the series subject because of protests from "sources which are altogether unknown." Instead, he delivered an impassioned plea for free speech. He placed free speech "on trial." And to his listeners he left the verdict.

Should he preach the alleged unpreachable sermon or side-step in obedience to clear the path for the plutocrats of political economy? Should he, like

a docile lamb, acquiesce to the wishes of these few—desperately frightened by the truth?

From the character of the man it was obvious that he would not withdraw without an honest struggle and declaration of facts. He would exercise that firmness of spirit which meets all danger without fear and which had come to him as a native gift.

After his radio plea for free speech, Father Coughlin retired to the privacy of his rectory. He was feeling none too happy. His associates, however, remained at the office of the Shrine of the Little Flower for any wire messages that might come, and in addition to prepare, at the priest's suggestion, a statement outlining the events of the entire incident.

Very late that night, statements were issued from the Shrine office to newspapers and wire services. Throughout the country, the press carried the priest's explanation of the controversy.

The Associated Press sent the story under a Detroit, January 4, dateline, which included the following from the office of the Shrine:

"Fr. Coughlin was informed by the Columbia Broadcasting System that a considerable number of protests had come to its attention regarding his sermons which were based on Pope Leo's letters on the subject of labor and unemployment. His sermons were termed 'inflammatory.'

"Fr. Coughlin stated that the contents of his sermons had been based absolutely on the principles of Catholic ethics. The examples which he used in his sermons and the facts which he quoted were at all times taken from the congressional record and from other reliable sources.

"Fr. Coughlin made mention over the Columbia

Broadcasting System tonight that these letters of protest had been lodged against him from sources which were altogether unknown, and appealed to his radio audience to express their pleasure whether or not these sermons should be continued.

"Already hundreds of telegrams are pouring into his office from persons of all creeds and from all walks of life, that by all means he continue with these discourses.

"Next Sunday he plans to explain the unsoundness of the so-called treaty of Versailles.

"Already he has had to increase his clerical staff to over one hundred letter openers to answer mail that is coming in."

That was his answer. He would continue and the "unpreachable sermon" would be preached. He would discuss the subject of prosperity. He would give the people what they wanted.

The next day Father Coughlin paced the floor of his office and to his secretary, Miss Gene Burke, he dictated the contents of "An Open Letter." This was to be printed and included in the reprint of the "unpreachable sermon," but not sent through the mails to his listeners until after the address had been given over the air. And while the priest was delivering himself of his feelings, a nation of admirers sat down and penned their gratitude to him for his courageous stand, and urged him onward in the "fight against the capitalists." Upwards of 350,000 letters, the largest mail ever received on a single presentation, flooded the Detroit post office that week. In the Wednesday morning mail—in only the first delivery—two days after the priest's invitation for opinions, more than 40,000 letters from all parts of

the country were delivered at the Shrine. Such was the force of his personality and the power of his speech.

This gave the cleric the confidence that he needed to continue in the path that he had taken, as a champion of the right and of the truth, as a friend of the people.

As I said, Father Coughlin framed "An Open Letter" the next day. It was dated January 5, 1931, and read:

"My dear Friend:

"A friend in need is a friend indeed!

"During the past four months I have tried to be a friend not only to the working class but to every one of my fellow Americans insofar as I pointed out certain human defects which have crept into our social life. Defects which run so parallel to the events which preceded the French Revolution that, if not remedied, are liable to create the same disturbance here.

"Coming from sources (I leave it to your own imagination to determine), a cowardly, behind-the-back attack has been made against the 'Golden Hour' with the hope of throttling free speech.

"In this emergency you, in turn, are proving to be a friend to the 'Golden Hour.'

"I thank you with all my heart.

"Of course you appreciate that the burden of this tremendous expense is totally borne upon the shoulders of you, my friends, who make financially possible this presentation.

"The little card enclosed will speak for itself.

"In the meantime, please remember that your prayers for our success must not be neglected. Event-

ually America will arise to be as glorious as she has been in the past.

Cordially yours,

(Signed)

CHARLES E. COUGHLIN"

The printed pamphlet containing the unpreachable sermon on prosperity, dated January 4, and the additional "Open Letter," dated January 5, were sent to the Detroit papers, but with a noticeable red-ink notation:

"Do not release before Monday 1/12/31."

If his discourses criticizing methods of meeting the unemployment situation had involved him in a controversy with officials of the radio chain, this address was sure-fire material. Since the priest arranged, paid for, and made his own addresses, radio officials could, in the meanwhile, say nothing other than that it was "up to him" whether he would continue his talks from Detroit. But of course at the expiration of the contract, there could be a change in schedules.

During the week, the priest's listeners had been so maddened by the attempt to throttle his discourse that they kept mail truckloads of their endorsements on a steady run to Royal Oak. And since that incident, they have continued to keep an avalanche of correspondence rolling over the Twelve-Mile road to the Shrine of the Little Flower.

Father Coughlin was "big news" now. Anything he said or did made the important places of the nation's news columns. Since news is that which interests a great number of people, and the best news that which interests the greatest number of people, no one

could better answer the requirements of the definition than the radio priest. He was now a celebrity, a national figure, a man to whom editors and reporters looked for "good material" for their stories. And he was as "big-minded" a man as he was "big news"; Detroit newspapermen attested to that fact. To them he was always courteous and frank. And they didn't betray his confidence—to keep a confidence was one of the rules of the profession.

Reporters liked to interview him. Not only were they sure of a story, but they were certain of indulgent attention. Father Coughlin had no secrets. His work at the Shrine was "open and above board." He invited all who so wished, to see for themselves. His "big business," though it involved the expenditures of thousands and the employment of more than one hundred, concerned only "Service."

The next Sunday night, before the scheduled hour of his appearance, millions throughout the country sat before their radios in breathless waiting for his voice and for his announcement that he would go to the heart of the unemployment situation. His "belittlers" waited breathlessly, too, for the "big moment." The priest did not fail them. His trilling of the "R's" and his weakness for the unorthodox use of the long "E"—as in "unpreecedented"—sounded out his attack which, in the main, was on international bankers.

In his discourse, Father Coughlin maintained that by salvaging their billions in tottering European investments, international bankers would force the United States into the World Court. As principal factors contributing to the world depression, the priest pointed to the substitution of these bankers

for the old-line diplomats and to the reparations settlement as an unsatisfactory and unprofitable attempt to justify the Treaty of Versailles. He pronounced Versailles as it is spelled—a pleasingly different offering, as was his entire presentation.

Of the subsequent Geneva conference, Father Coughlin said, "The mountains groaned and, as history has proven, they brought forth a mouse." Father Coughlin told his radio audience:

"What we strive for is not revolution, but restoration of principles shelved by the type of radical who identifies prosperity with plutocracy. The American people have been led to believe that the Treaty of Versailles actually made peace, whereas it has done little more than perpetuate hostility. . . . The stock market has become as popular as bridge. . . . We are forced to admit that the Treaty of Versailles and its manipulations by international bankers has failed to produce peace in Europe or prosperity in America. . . . Perhaps this fact explains so much anxiety in certain quarters for us to join the World Court, to save some of the billions invested by our international financiers in the blood bonds born of an unjust treaty."

Objectors took exception to the priest's radio discourses on the grounds that he was placing in the minds of the people a consciousness of revolution. In many circles it was felt that he was precipitating conflict rather than helping the remedial application to possible conflict.

"Finance Crisis Blamed on Bankers, Priest Says They Seek To Salvage Investments by Trapping United States."

This was the concurring sentiment expressed in the headlines of the nation, based on the priest's sermon, an address that caused widespread discussion. And, as many of us know, Father Coughlin was right again in placing his finger on the sore spot of the economic crisis. Like every national figure, he had his boosters and deriders. In his case, however, his admirers and supporters were so overwhelmingly and astoundingly in the majority that their numbers were making history. But the priest knew he had a fight on his hands. Bishop Gallagher was convinced that the cleric was "following in the footsteps of Jesus." And Father Coughlin could always draw out Pope Leo's letters to show the source of his doctrines and Christian ethics which made of politics and economics a moral and religious issue.

An unfriendly radio columnist in a Detroit weekly commented thus on the sermon and its author:

"Well, the allegedly unpreachable sermon has been preached. Yet the sun still rises and sets on schedule. . . . The world wags on . . . and he established perhaps a world's record by favorably quoting from the Pope and Tom Heflin in the same five minutes . . . the recent incident has proved him a good showman. . . . Needless to state, Father Coughlin stands well with the whole organization at his key station, WXYZ. In fact, the WXYZ management was highly indignant over the impression which seemed to exist in some quarters to the effect that the station itself had been back of the recent criticism."

Father Coughlin accepted the commentary graciously. Every man had a right to his opinion. He

had his; let the columnist enjoy his, too. But he knew that his criticizers were waiting for him to make a slip—the slightest kind of a slip. Well, until he did, he considered himself answerable only to his bishop.

If the public was unaware that the man they had been listening to was a dyed-in-the-wool nationalist, they were now sufficiently convinced of the fact. And, in his continued talks, the priest repeatedly stressed his loyalty to America and his opposition to any foreign entanglements which would sap the country's life for the good of European progress.

Stout and stalwart, the valiant kept marching on. A few radio stations, however, broke away from the chain. But, strange as it may seem, WCCO of Minneapolis-St. Paul and WGR of Buffalo—the two stations charged with the seat of the whole ruction—continued as members of the nation-wide network.

It was this sermon on prosperity that started Father Coughlin on a series of national themes in which he named individuals contributing to the basic cause of depression. For the remaining weeks of the season, he devoted his discourses to giving the public the "low-down" on propositions and economic contemplations that the people otherwise would not have been informed about. It was dangerous stuff, but the priest had, always, his facts and his sources before him. If he was challenged, and later he was, he could produce "the goods." He read constantly. I doubt if there are many in the country so well versed on the current topics of the day as is this priest. He was a philosopher who read dime novels. He was a scholastic who understood politics. He was a priest schooled in economics. He was a

preacher who followed the news. He was a holy man who could analyze the "why" of crime. And he was alert and sufficiently capable of identifying gangsters and "public enemies" of the Al Capone make-up. "Blind pigs" and "hurdy-gurdy night clubs" were vernacular expressions, but Father Coughlin recognized their synonymity and used them to prove his point. He was a cleric abreast of the times. In short, he came, he saw, and he conquered by telling what he knew.

Let me divert your attention for just a few paragraphs and picture to you an incident that can more efficiently describe Father Coughlin, the man, by comparison, than perhaps any of my written words.

You probably are familiar by now with the fact that last March Father Coughlin and I enjoyed many interviews together. Well, one morning, by appointment, we were just entering the basement office of the Crucifixion Tower where a hundred or more young women were busily at work, when he was stopped by a group of men who wanted to shake his hand, say "howdy," and express appreciative sentiments. They represented a team of champion bowlers and were headed by the priest of their parish. Detroit, at the time, was the scene of a championship bowling tournament and this group was one of many vieing for honors in the matches. (I deem it wise not to mention the city from which the group came, for to do so would be about the same thing as naming the priest who accompanied them.) They introduced themselves to the Royal Oak priest by way of their own priest. Both clerics shook hands. The out-of-town priest was fair-faced, sandy-haired, and stout. During the time he spoke to Father Coughlin,

MISS MUGGLEBEE INTERVIEWING FATHER COUGHLIN

not once did he wipe away from his visage the broad, unmeaning grin. His well-fed body rocked to and fro with continuous laughter as he spoke. He was a pleasant, hail-fellow man of obvious congeniality. He slapped Father Coughlin on the back good-naturedly and fairly sing-songed his tribute:

"Fine work you're doing. Great place you have here. We thought we would drop in and look around."

Father Coughlin started to tell him about the work of the Shrine, but the man's eye was caught by miniature St. Therese statuary on a near-by table and he turned to it. Father Coughlin chatted with the bowlers and inquired of them simply and pleasantly concerning the progress of the tournament. I stood by and watched. The point I make is in the contrast of the two personalities based on the impressions which came to my lay eyes.

When they had gone, and Father Coughlin and I were seated at a table to continue our talk, I began:

"If you will permit me, Father, I can't help but say this. You are so modest about your accomplishments, and persistently you refuse to believe that you are a national figure with a tug on the hearts of millions; you are so calm about this ocean of acclaim, you must realize that these millions can't be wrong about you. That priest who just left—his type is the reason for your popularity."

He tried to wave my adulation aside, but I continued:

"Surely you must realize the difference between you and him. You're not much younger, and yet your vigorous personality, your very facial features, your brisk intellect were so far ahead of his, that he

—pardon me, Father, but I thought he was pathetic by comparison. He had no fire, no energy, no *qui vive*. The satisfaction of a comfortable parish and a well-stocked larder was written all over him. Why, he appeared like an excursionist, out on a holiday and having the best time ever. You are dynamic. So few are, you know."

He didn't reply to my words. He wasn't looking directly at me. His hands were folded on the table, his fingers entwined. He was wearing his glasses, but they didn't hide from me the bit of sadness that was lodged behind them in his eyes. Eyes that seemed to say that maybe it was better to be more like the out-of-town priest, free, unworried, happy-go-lucky, uncaring for the vicissitudes of a great nation and its millions beyond the confines of his parish. Eyes that mused, perhaps it was better to live and let the rest of the world go by—by itself. But, we can't change the spots on the leopard. We are what we are, and we all have physical and mental limitations, native endowments which we cannot surpass. Nor can a man remake his life at the forty-year mark, if in his heart there beats a constant and uncontrollable urge to befriend his fellowmen and to secure for them deserving benefactions. It is no small wonder that men and women who earned their daily bread by hard work worshiped the priest who all his life subscribed to the scripture of hard work to earn his daily bread.

While the newspapers were carrying his attack on international bankers, the *New York American*, conducting an open forum on the question: "Shall divorce laws be made more liberal or stringent?" also

carried a signed article from Father Coughlin's pen, in which he charged:

"The destruction of the Roman family through the instrument of divorce preceded the destruction of the Roman Empire. One of the basic principles of Communism is the practical communism of womankind; the practical communism of children. The principle of divorce fits hand in glove with the Communistic doctrine."

The next day, the Detroit papers reprinted the article. All this, of course, proved the importance of the man. When an eastern daily with a circulation of over a million seeks out a mid-western priest to contribute an article to its columns for the entertainment and informative enlightenment of a sophisticated Manhattan reading public, therein is tribute enough to the blanket popularity of Father Coughlin throughout America.

The next week he became the champion of the service man. The championing of the cause of service men he has carried on steadfastly. In an interview printed in the *Detroit Times* of January 19, he flayed Andrew Mellon, "billionaire secretary of the treasury," for the delay of payment of adjusted service certificates. He was skating on thin ice, through which many orators would have hopelessly dropped to doom; for Father Coughlin it seemed to be of sufficient thickness to hold up his upright frame. He urged, through the press, all citizens to back the move to have Congress approve immediate cash payment of the certificates, terming the expression "bonus" a misnomer.

He asked:

"Why should the Secretary of the Treasury insist upon being the guardian for all the ex-soldiers—he who knows not want? They were not asked if they knew how to give their lives or their limbs nor if they would squander their blood on French soil. But there is danger of their squandering their money which is held on the basis of certificates, doled out to them in small quantities and interest charged upon it. These certificates represent a debt the government has legally confessed is due to the ex-soldiers for adjusted pay based upon the service rendered."

The next Sunday, over the air, Father Coughlin charged that three large oil companies conspired to restrict production of American oil to provide a market for cheaper Venezuelan oils. In his attack on the "oil plot," as the press headlined the gist of his radio discourse, Father Coughlin named the Royal Dutch Shell Oil as one of the companies that engineered the project. The remaining two companies he did not name because:

"I would be charged with indirectly attacking a plutocrat who is too close to our government and insinuating that he had something to do with keeping foreign oil exempt from tariff taxation."

Finally he stated:

"We have not been satisfied to loan millions of dollars of our capital to establish foreign industrial competition to our American laborer. We have gone a step further in perpetuating his poverty by permitting this unfair competition in the oil industry. Meanwhile, the price of your gasoline has not dropped very considerably."

These radio recitals presupposed, to be sure, extensive investigation of facts, records, and statistics.

A wondering public, approving him in contributions and letters, however, sat back and asked itself:

"How does he do it? How does he get away with it?"

The answer was simply this. He was the "Teddy" Roosevelt of the American priesthood. He was a priest who made his circumstances, not simply met them. He was a cleric who compromised his circumstances, maybe, but *never* his principle. As a priest he had the fearlessness of "Teddy" Roosevelt, his vigor and his vivacity, his power of expression and his power of execution.

Father Coughlin—the "Teddy" Roosevelt of American priesthood.

He paid as he went. He accepted no gratuities—from radio stations or from labor organizations or from anybody—that could reflect as propaganda bribe. He was an individualist, extreme perhaps, but nevertheless a man of rightly-motivated convictions. When excursionists left his simple-framed church, they took with them the picture of a be-spectacled man with clean-cut face, the penetrating eyes of a scholar, the pleasant smile of a sympathizer, the indefinable wistfulness of a believer, and the graciousness of a charming host. Then they could never forget how smartly-dressed was the football figure of the priest, nor the robustness he maintained with the kind help of gymnasium exercises.

During all this time, Father Coughlin was building up his office force and supervising the technique by which the mail was easily managed.

There was some talk which reached him that the Columbia Broadcasting officials would not permit him to renew his contract with them or buy time for

the coming season. Father Coughlin, however, refused to credit the rumor until he was officially notified by the New York radio heads. As his time was not yet expired—he had a few more weeks of broadcasting—he continued in the same stride as had been his custom.

The order to "temper and restrain" his remarks in the future, he did not heed, since upwards of 350,000 people ordered him to continue "free and unhampered in his discourses."

Though he had hitherto maintained silence on the question of prohibition, on March 8 he broke his word-fast. After several years of watchful observation, Father Coughlin had at last crystallized his sentiments. Although he delivered a bitter and more vicious attack against prohibition some months later —a signal triumph for him—on this Sunday he let it be known nationally that he was ready to "indict prohibition as a rank failure." He assailed the dry law as "the most diabolical influence in the land outside the actual negation of religion." Although at this time he declared that he was "neither for nor against prohibition," he expressed absolute opposition to the method of enactment of the law and charged that it was "making hypocrites of Americans, criminals of citizens, and potential bandits of the youth of your country." He dramatically titled his sermon: "The Slaughter of the Innocents."

If he did not, then, publicly state his position on the question, it was very apparent that he was not in sympathy with the law when he maintained:

"Children could not go into the saloon, but the Volstead Act takes the saloon to the children. Adults and children, at one table, sip these unconstitution-

ally protected liquors, dàmn the constitution, curse and vilify the enforcement officers. Children here are led into lives of crime."

In the short span of a few weeks he had become the friend of the service man, the friend of the anti-prohibitionist, and the foe of three giant oil companies. What next? Father Coughlin was credited with increasing the sentiment against prohibition throughout the country. That he was a friend of the people was generally conceded, though his method of befriending them was not at all times approved. Five and ten cent statesmen could lie in ambush waiting to drop the noose, but when they attempted to pounce upon him, he was right there ready to trip them up. He had facts; they had sentimentality. He was no easy-going priest, finding pleasant expression of life in the stagnant gentility of an existence among the flowers and softness of literary romanticism. Key words of his religion were spelled in syllables of sweat and blood, sacrifice and strife, defense and glory of Christian ethics, resurrection and restoration, justice and honesty.

When he started to broadcast, he didn't plunge headlong into the idea of becoming the people's champion or the "under-dog's" defender, you will remember. He conceived the radio as a means of preaching the Gospel because of adversity, adversity that compelled him to sleep for the first year at Royal Oak in a day-bed in a small vestry, that compelled him to shiver and sleeplessly to toss out a long, protracted, crawling darkness. Nobody wants to endure hardships. Not even a priest wants to put up with fiery crosses and pneumonia under the frowns of fortune and the gathering clouds of seem-

ing hopelessness. The smart man looks for a way out. Father Coughlin had successfully sought recourse in the wisdom of St. Matthew:

> "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Few priests have had to suffer privations of the kind Father Coughlin encountered in Royal Oak, when, as a thirty-five-year-old cleric, he took hold of a community of human rawness and subdued it by dint of his remarkable individualism and brilliance. He had no large, pleasing parish wherein to agreeably follow in the worn footsteps of a predecessor. Nor did he have a fairly adequate rectory, sufficient for human needs. He had to "make straight the paths" for God and for himself. He had to make a virtue of necessity. That he did, of course, decidedly adds to his credit.

It wasn't his fault that the common people needed a champion. They just did, that is all. Great Britain had its Cardinal Henry Edward Manning to fight against the moneyed barons of London in defense of the poor in the slums. America has its Father Coughlin, a humble priest, with the never-say-die tenacity of an Irishman, gamely battling for her stricken laborers against the unscrupulous capitalists and financiers who have forced into prostitution, as mistresses of machines, the common people.

To the preparations of his sermons he gave long, tedious hours of research and study. With a few packages of cigarettes—he is an incessant smoker—and Miss Burke at a table with sharp pointed pencils and several stenographic notebooks, and ample space

FATHER COUGHLIN DICTATING TO ONE OF HIS SECRETARIES

to pace back and forth, Father Coughlin's brain child was expressed in a flow of language that had been nursed for years. He had been a devotee of drama in college; he was now an ardent devotee of current events, with the same thoroughness, with the same persistence, with the same urge to pierce through fallacious oratory. All items of importance appearing in the press were clipped and filed for his attention by the remaining three of his corps of four capable, young women secretaries.

Many times he had his sermons prepared in the middle of the week, to be gone over and approved by his Right Reverend. But if, on a Saturday morning, the day before the scheduled broadcast, a news story of considerable importance—affecting the social and religious status of men and women—"broke," immediately Father Coughlin set himself down to the task of changing his discourse and framing one based on the meat of the news story. It meant grinding hours of hard work, but for hard work the priest was a glutton.

On Saturday, March 21, the press of the country blazed with front-page headlines that the Federal Council of Churches of Christ of America favored birth control. News stories told of a report, signed by representatives of twenty-seven Protestant churches, which urged abstinence as the method of birth control for the achievement of a high and moral goal. The report, however, was not the unanimous opinion of the entire body. It was the sentiment of the representatives, carefully drawn from their findings after diligent study of the subject in about twenty meetings. The report was said not to be binding on any of the member churches, for within their dis-

cretion was left its acceptance or rejection. Nor were all who signed the report in accord with the principle of birth control. The Very Reverend Howard Chandler Robbins of the General Theological Seminary, former dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine of New York, for one, was utterly opposed to the principle, though his name headed the list of signers.

With a bundle of newspapers under her arm, one of Father Coughlin's four secretaries entered his office. She laid them before him on the table and said knowingly:

"You probably will want to change your sermon for to-morrow night, Father."

Before him he saw all kinds of newspaper make-up concurring in the one "big" story of the day:

"Protestant Church Council favors birth control."

The headlines didn't take his breath away. For some time he had been quietly observing the reported conferences of the Federal Council of Churches, expecting momentarily the contents of this "news break." Now the cat was out of the bag. Now was the time for Catholic action. He lit a cigarette and turned to the encyclical letters of Pope Pius XI. There he found these words issued from Rome by the present-day Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church:

"If any pastor of souls, which may, God forbid, lead the faithful entrusted to him into the errors of birth control, or should at least confirm them by approval or guilty silence, let him be mindful of the fact that he must render a strict account to God, the

Supreme Judge, for the betrayal of His sacred trust, and let him take to himself the words of Christ: 'They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.' "

. . . "guilty silence."

Hardly could the radio priest be found guilty of "guilty silence."

. . . "blind leader of the blind."

Two piercing eyes in a brilliant head of knowledge and understanding acquitted him of any such charge.

The public was blind maybe. There was the keynote of his mission, the mission of Saint Therese and the mission of the radio shrine erected in her honor. Father Coughlin was a crusader in the ranks. His captain was Bishop Gallagher. Together they instituted a two-man crusade against prevailing peccancy, social, economic, and political. Father Coughlin's crusade against radicalism, paganism, and capitalism was a "hostile" expedition under papal sanction. Like the seven (some reckon nine) military expeditions undertaken between 1096 and 1270 by Christian powers to recover the Holy Land from the Mohammedans, the Royal Oak radio expedition was undertaken to recover the moral and physical resources of a country for her millions, pledged to the unveiling of TRUTH. Of this virtue, Father Coughlin was an incorrigible addict.

His radio discussion on birth control, therefore, would not be a discussion between Catholic and Protestant; it would be a discussion between Christian and pagan. For the next night—Sunday—he had planned an entirely different address. Now, at the last minute, he changed, and with little preparation

took for his title, "The Great Betrayal." For him, it was no nervous hazard to speak, practically extemporaneously, before a metal disc, once emotionally aroused. Modestly apologizing that he preferred "to risk the niceties of rhetoric," the priest plunged into an attack on the Protestant church report, and scathingly denounced it as a "surrender to the ideal of paganism" and a "betrayal to the god of political economy." Birth control, he said, was an unfit subject of conversation for decent people, but that in these days it had become a "by-word in the mouths of children." He militantly attacked the principle, and, by inference, discredited George W. Wickersham and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.—"such influential laymen"—for their favorable commitment to birth control.

"The question of birth control is hundreds of years older than the Federal Council of Churches in America," he declared over the air. "It was born not because of a great moral issue but because of a matter of dollars and cents. Birth control is, perhaps, the most heinous and vicious of sins."

He pointed out that in the past "population was limited as the Almighty God saw fit to limit it—by war and pestilence and diseases and the marriage customs and the fecundity of His peoples."

He drew from his cultural and classical fund to attack the thesis of Malthus, which upheld the theory that population tends to increase more rapidly than the means of sustenance.

"Let us not forget that in the days of Malthus (1798) the national credit was low. And the poor laws (of England) gave paupers doles and increased, tremendously, the number of improvident marriages

and illegitimate births and unemployment," he challenged.

Point blank, he charged that the pronouncement of the Federal Council of Churches of America came "on the heels of another depression." And against the Council itself he registered this vitriolic complaint:

"Once more the people of the country, whom the Federal Council of Churches is supposed to represent, have been traded and bartered to the god of political economy. One is not surprised that such a thing at last has eventuated. Those of us who are acquainted with the activities of the Communistic doctrines in this country, have long since breathed rather nervously at the activities of certain officials of the Federal Council of Churches in America in abetting the doctrines of Lenin and of advocating the ideals of Bolshevism. Now that these few have chosen to seek a remedy for our social conditions in the cesspools of Grecian vice; now that they have surrendered their leadership to follow the doctrines of Aspasia, let them realize that they have sounded the death-knell of The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America."

Father Coughlin dared "where angels fear to tread." But he was sure of his footing.

The Associated Press took more than a column of type from his air sermon and sent it over the wires to the hundreds of newspapers which subscribe to their franchise. And again the radio priest was nationally publicized in screaming black type.

"Dollars In Birth Control, Economic Issue, Says Priest, Assailing Report."

"Birth Control Report Scored, Fr. Coughlin Calls It Surrender to Ideals of Paganism."

"Birth Control Hit by Priest."

He was building up a fat envelope about himself for the reference files of the leading newspapers of America.

The next week, on Easter Sunday, the radio priest brought to a close a highly dramatic and auspicious broadcasting season of twenty-four sermons and one extemporized plea for free speech. He had ended a trying but successful year. His radio audience was conservatively estimated at about 40,000,000 listeners. Would the Columbia Broadcasting System renew his contract and again sell him time for the coming season? Well, there was time for that.

For the moment, he needed a brief respite from the labors of his church. The Charity Crucifixion Tower was slowly rising above the ground. Soon it would be a completed memorial to his talents and to the gracious indulgence of his bishop.

The next month, Father Coughlin went to New York as guest speaker at the functions of two Manhattan organizations, to be dined and lionized as a celebrity.

## CHAPTER XIX

*"Sweet are the uses of adversity*
*Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,*
*Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;"*

—SHAKESPEARE.

Now merits an appearance in the story, casually, to play "a bit" in Father Coughlin's drama of human affairs, James John Walker, dapper Mayor of New York. (He was Mayor until the first week of September, 1932, when he resigned under fire—the first New York mayor to do so.) He is the actor's friend, and hailed by Old Broadway as "the greatest fellow on earth." A satisfying consolation, to say the least. But he is not cast in his customary rôle of mirth and joy as was the mythical Greek goddess, Euphrosyne, The trim, slim, thin-faced, sun-tanned, volatile New Yorker, fashion-plate advertisement for what the well dressed man should wear in and out of politics, genially and effectively smiles away his tardy entry. He strides with dignified pomp to the head table in the ballroom of the Times Square Hotel Astor—an antiquated structure of better days and pre-prohibition festivities in the heart of New York's theatre district; on the main stem of perspective-blinding incandescence; along the rialto of broken hearts and misspent lives, of irretrievable yesterdays and vague to-morrows, of vain hopes and shattered illusions; on Broadway, a dead end street of friendly enemies. On his face, written into the wrinkles, is an expres-

sion of eagerness, insinuating a desire to get something off his chest.

Father Coughlin, hale, hearty, and happy, arrived in New York a few days previously. He came, first of all, to attend a testimonial dinner given in his honor by the New York State Department, Veterans of Foreign Wars, on Friday evening, April 24. Manhattan air was rife with political excitement and nasty rumors. Two days later, following a mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral at which the beloved Cardinal Hayes was the celebrant, Father Coughlin was sitting on a dais in the Hotel Astor ballroom as the principal speaker for the annual communion breakfast of the New York Fire Department, Holy Name Society. Came personable Mayor Walker to this function, to extend, in the name of the opulent, influential, incomparable, and lavishly press-agented New York, greetings to her assembled firemen and felicitations to the visiting Michigan priest.

The vibrant "Jimmy," about the best publicity copy Gotham ever produced, was back only a few weeks from the languorous warmth and desert rejuvenescence of Palm Springs, California. Rundown Mr. Walker had found it necessary to run away from the none too comfortable city in the interest of his waning health. He was slightly annoyed this warm Sunday morning, and the annoyance was discernible even through his browned complexion. Before he went West, and now since his return, expert clergy marksmen had been using him for the bull's eye of their target and the receptacle for their invective. A newly-formed citizens' organization, designed to bring about his removal from office and

the hopeless banishment of Tammany Hall from city government, had also raised a hue and cry and turned their faces against him.

The estimable Reverend John Haynes Holmes, vainglorious and disposed to publicity, reformer, advocate of companionate marriage as "the only solution to the modern marriage problem," and pastor of the fashionable Community Church, Park Avenue and 34th street, was the chairman of this unexpectedly successful preliminary, this city affairs committee of disturbed, civic-minded citizens, alarmed over the future of their great New York. It was a distinguished honor for such a distinguished gentleman to make the most of. His chief assistant, vice-president of the committee, was Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise, a Jewish liberal, of the Madison Avenue Synagogue, likewise a free-speaker, radical reformer, and unopposed to news print.

On March 13, while Walker was basking in the California sunshine, baking a suppleness into the joints of his lithe figure and indifferent to the harangues of his pulpit enemies, Dr. Holmes, his nemesis, boastfully announced that he had "the goods" on the Mayor. He said he would file with Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt specific charges involving "incompetence, gross negligence, and indifference to the city welfare." Rabbi Wise surprisingly suggested waiting until Walker's return from his vacation. But the committee over-ruled him and, swayed by their irresistible and persuasive chairman, demanded executive recognition of their allegations filed at Albany. Three weeks later, on March 30, Dr. Holmes summoned a mass meeting in Carnegie Hall. An estimated crowd of about three thousand citizens

stormed the gigantic auditorium as soon as the doors were opened, and the overflow remained in the adjacent streets. From the Reverend Holmes came the sonorous bellow demanding that the citizens of New York "haul down the black flag of corruption." Much applause, some hissing. Rabbi Wise was ill and unable to attend, but in his place appeared Rabbi Sydney B. Goldstein. Norman Thomas and Heywood Broun (newspaper columnist and Socialist) were in their element. The meeting took on the complexion of a political session with rallying hoorahs and an every-man-for-himself enjoyment. Broun facetiously toyed with Walker's waywardness.

"I have an excellent job picked out for Mayor Walker," he announced, "the job of ex-mayor—and I think he'd crave it. I'd rather go out on a party with Jimmy Walker but I don't see what that has got to do with being mayor of New York."

Dust flew in all directions. And before the Community Church pastor, Thomas, Broun, and others got through, there was mud slung into the eyes of likeable, harmless "Jimmy" Walker. The clean-up broom swished furiously in the hands of his assailants.

On the day of the mass meeting, Mayor Walker, lounging in the desert-kissed sirocco of Palm Springs, fetchingly garbed in blue and black silk pajamas, received in the mails from his Chief, Governor Roosevelt, the charges filed against him by the organization of irate citizens. While reading the document, signed by Dr. Holmes and Rabbi Wise, Walker sipped a glass of milk. He smiled and continued to smile while reading the extensive petition, finding nothing in the written charges so unpleasant

as to dent his smile. A hot, dry wind blew the oh-so-many pages of the document, but the mayor fastened more tightly the official clip around them. He changed his lackadaisical position, arose from the swinging desert couch, and shook his silk trouser legs free of their creases. He waved an inferred "so long" to newspapermen and started indoors. Suddenly he remembered that he had not taken the precious and voluminous record with him. He turned about, smiled, picked it up, and remarked to his visiting scribes:

"I must put these away before they are changed. Some one might put something else in them."

At half-past two the next day, Walker, his film executive friend, Alfred Cleveland Blumenthal, and Mrs. Blumenthal (the glamorous, stage-actress, Peggy Fears), who had accompanied him on his trip seventeen days before, were on their way East by way of an itinerary that included El Paso, Dallas, Kansas City, Chicago, and the "Twentieth Century Limited" to New York. Walker was returning to "give my answer," promised on his arrival.

Now the rested Mayor was back in the city over which he held sway, or thought he did, and denouncing his pulpit criticizers as Socialists. As he entered the festive Hotel Astor ballroom, he heard clear, complimentary words — melodious to his ears — spoken on his behalf. A rising voice, that of Father Coughlin, was stigmatizing the attacks upon Walker as veiling "a hidden purpose" of Communism to tear down progressively the city, state, and federal government. Walker stopped. For a moment, he thought he was in the wrong place, at the wrong gath-

ering, and was ready to turn about. He had been so constantly maligned for the past few months that favorable utterances in his defense sounded like unintelligible, foreign vowels and syllables. When he finally entered the ballroom, as Father Coughlin was talking, his appearance was both timely and dramatic. Twenty-five hundred New York firemen rose to their feet in a body and cheered wildly for him as he walked to the head table to sit beside the standing figure of the radio priest. Walker opened his face into a broad, heart-felt smile of sincere appreciation and thanks. These were his friends. When silence was restored, Father Coughlin continued eloquently, his voice penetrating the metal discs of WOR and WHN, placed before him on the table to broadcast his address. Came Father Coughlin again to the defense of "Jimmy" Walker. By name he assailed his two clergy critics, his accusers and his abusers—"the Reverend Holmes who dares not have his name scrutinized and the Reverend Doctor Wise who likewise has extended his hand to those of an inflammatory nature."

The ballroom thundered with applause. It was a signal triumph for the Mayor and an unexpected pleasure, since the words of tribute came from the nationally-famed Michigan priest.

"Thanks," said appreciative "Jimmy" to the priest when he sat down.

"Not at all," answered Father Coughlin.

If Mayor Walker was slightly annoyed when he entered the ballroom, ready and willing to "get something off his chest," he was now beaming with anxiety to continue as had the Royal Oak protagonist. But as Father Coughlin had dared, Mayor Walker dared

not. His barbs were plainly directed at Reverend Holmes and Rabbi Wise, but he did not mention them by name. He simply alluded to them caustically as "parlor Communists" and "men whose work is the salvation of souls who use their power to wreck and destroy others." He histrionically cried aloud that his administration "is merely the goat, the target" for the spread of Communistic propaganda. In his inimitable fashion, he again brought to their feet the twenty-five hundred firemen, when he asserted:

"The impending fight will find me in the forefront, willing to surrender all rather than permit one decent public servant to be debased."

Walker sat down, obviously touched by the ovation. He and Father Coughlin were in mutual whispers. The crowd continued to roar their allegiance to both speakers. The communion breakfast was an important news story, widely played up. The public suddenly discovered that Father Coughlin was the Mayor's defender.

> "Rev. Coughlin Assails Foes of Walker, Reds Back of Attack, Says Gotham Mayor; Defended in Speech by Detroiter."

Under a Universal Wire Service date-line story, the headline was extended. Thousands upon thousands of New Yorkers, mysteriously addicted to Walker's charms and graces, were the avowed friends and supporters of the radio priest for his fearless attack upon the men of the pulpit. However, in New York church circles, Father Coughlin's manly defense was not so warmly received. They

said of him that he was "indiscreet" in attacking the Manhattan mayor's foes. But Father Coughlin again exercised that prerogative of courage to speak his mind as he observed the facts.

Reverend Holmes ignored the priest's excoriation of him and continued to rake Walker over the coals. Seeking a follow-up story, New York newspapers sought him out for a comment. Cheerfully Reverend Holmes granted an interview and said:

"The Mayor is obviously panicky. His Sunday address shows a frightened and desperate mind. Last week the Mayor denounced Rabbi Wise and myself as Socialists. Yesterday he described us as Communists. I imagine that to-morrow he will discover we are Anarchists. It's all very interesting, but like the flowers that are blooming these Spring days, it has nothing to do with the case. It is not epithets but epitaphs that we are concerned with in his case, as the Mayor will discover in due time."

Although Walker did find out in due time and did resign under the fire of a city-wide investigation into his administration, he at least enjoyed the satisfaction of reading in the news column that Governor Roosevelt bluntly expressed executive doubt of the sincerity of the two clergymen when they later sought to oust two others of the political regime. And then, when Dr. Holmes and Rabbi Wise attacked the governor himself, Governor Roosevelt flatly declared against them:

"If they would serve their God as they seek to serve themselves, the people of the city of New York would be the gainers."

While in New York, Father Coughlin sounded out the Columbia officials on his continuance as a

broadcaster over their national chain. It was a bit premature for any official announcement of their schedules, but, reading between the lines, he felt reasonably certain that he would not be aboard their radio band wagon in the fall. He went to Alfred McCosker at 1440 Broadway, head of station WOR of Newark and New York, and had a long talk with him on the possibilities of enticing the Yankee network into his own national hook-up. McCosker was friendly to the priest and positively assured him that WOR would help him all it could in forming the Eastern hook-up for his own chain.

Forgetting New York and New York politics and temporarily packing away the radio concerns, Father Coughlin returned to Royal Oak. There were many things to be done, and he foresaw a busy summer that would ruthlessly demand all of his time and his energies. Precautious, he was. So, he went to see his other dear, radio friend, Leo Fitzpatrick. He told him, too, that he wouldn't be part of the Columbia network in October and that they would have to work fast in arranging their own network. In all his radio troubles, Fitzpatrick was Father Coughlin's "ace in the hole." Fitzpatrick could be counted on and called upon at any time and he never was found lacking in aid and assistance.

In Fitzpatrick's high-up office the two men talked, smoked, and planned.

"So they've barred you," Fitzpatrick shook his head, amazed. "The papers haven't the news yet."

"No, Leo, but they will shortly, and when they do, I'd like to have partial arrangements to make public. I tell you, Leo, there's an ulterior motive behind the

ban Columbia has placed on me. We must do something."

"It is practically an impossibility to buy time all over the country that will come at the same hour and still blanket the whole territory. It is quite a job," the radio manager discouraged him.

"Maybe it can't be done, but let us see if it can't. Let us try," the priest urged him.

"It will be an expensive proposition, and maybe, Father, you're biting off more than you can chew."

Father Coughlin had courage.

"Sound out the radio stations. Find out if they will co-operate with us. See how they feel about it. I think we can do it," the priest still maintained. Somehow, he was confident that everything would turn out all right.

"I'll try, Father. I'll do my best. You can count on me."

They shook hands, the bargain was sealed, and the priest returned to his rectory.

A few days later, he telephoned Fitzpatrick and confirmed the suspicion.

"They have officially barred me, Leo," the priest said. "Go ahead with our plans. When we have something arranged, we'll announce it through the press."

"I'll hurry the arrangements as fast as I can, Father. I am sure of several that can be lined up, anyway."

With this in mind, Father Coughlin lost himself in plans for a holiday for children. He was what he has always been, despite the fame and influence and glory that have come to him—the friend of boys and girls, the needy, and the poor. He could be a

bitter denunciator of wrongs, a fearful man of frightening words painting with his sweeping brush the gory redness of an imminent French Revolution; he could be the piercing, haunting "voice of the wilderness." And, too, he could reframe his personality to meet the cares and solicitudes attendant upon gentle youth. Father Coughlin loved little children —"the child shall lead them"—the men and the women of to-morrow, the citizens of the future, the developing, strengthening backbone of America, the salvation of the country.

"I think that saving a little child,
And bringing him to his own,
Is a derned sight better business
Than loafing around a throne."

To this thought, Father Coughlin subscribed gentle severity in his Children's Hour over the air and in his beliefs. For as morning reveals the character of the daylight hours which follow, so does childhood open the road at the end of which stands the adult man. The formative years of youth become the settled hours of maturity. He had a message for the young ones, in a ceaseless, satisfying desire to inculcate upon them sweetness, love, charity, goodness, virtue, and faith. Show me a man who dislikes children, and I will show you an embittered individual. Show me a man who prefers dogs to girls and boys, and I will reveal to you an abnormal temperament; a man who prefers horses to heirs, and I will tear away the disguise of a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

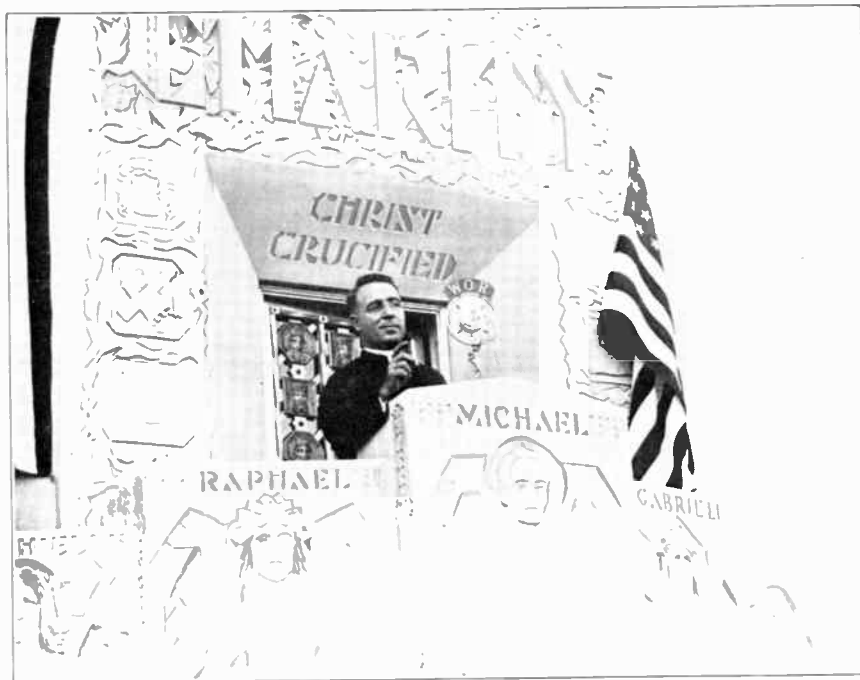
Almost immediately upon his return to the Shrine of the Little Flower, Father Coughlin invited every child within hearing of his radio voice to be his guest

on the grounds of his church (where the Tower was nearing completion) on June 14, two weeks hence. The Royal Oak city commission agreed to rope off and close the Twelve-Mile road for half a mile on each side of the Shrine, that traffic might not interfere with the safety and fun of the strolling youngsters. The party followed the regular broadcast of the Children's Hour over WJR at half-past three, but long before the scheduled hour, a world of children appeared as never before was seen. More than thirty thousand school goers, and thousands of grown-ups who accompanied them, came from all over Michigan to Royal Oak and to Father Coughlin's party; and they heard his voice amplified from the improvised platform in front of the Shrine on which he stood to deliver his out-of-doors sermon.

Mayor H. Lloyd Clawson of Royal Oak, assisted by mayors of ten other cities of southern Oakland County, acted as master of ceremonies. For a worthwhile afternoon, these city officials, including several judges, dropped their official robes of office to witness an unbelievable congregation of "children like olive plants round thy table." More than a hundred policemen supervised the crowds in friendly assistance. It was a gala day. High officials paid high tribute to Father Coughlin for his "good work among the young" and for his incredible adroitness in arranging such a remarkable occasion.

"And a little child shall lead them——"

If the Nazarene moved about the throngs in attendance upon Father Coughlin's party on that afternoon, He saw city and state dignitaries with the white serviette of indulgence handing out to these




FATHER COUGHLIN BROADCASTING FROM THE FIRST UNIT OF THE ONLY RADIO CHURCH

thousands of little boys and girls ice cream, milk, cake, ginger-ale, and pies. He saw a happiness dominated by a religious spirit intent upon training children in the way they should go, that in adult life they would not depart from it. He heard His disciple speak sincerely:

> "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

He saw that youngsters were the ruling lords of the day. He saw parched throats gulping down more than thirty thousand pints of milk; watery mouths lapping up more than a ton of ice cream; little stomachs swelling with the rivers of ginger ale and wagonloads of pies emptied into them. He saw festivities of gigantic size and proportions such as never before had been attempted in the city. He saw growing girlhood and boyhood romping and reveling on the lawns and spacious vistas of the Charity Crucifixion Tower, the first unit of the radio church pledged to His "mystical bride" and dedicated to His Gospel. And, last but not least, He saw the huge frame of a man moving about the gathering to give it religious dignity with an ineffaceable smile of beneficence for those he loved. There had been charity for Father Coughlin enabling him to erect his monument. Now, there was charity for the children. Nothing for himself—everything for others.

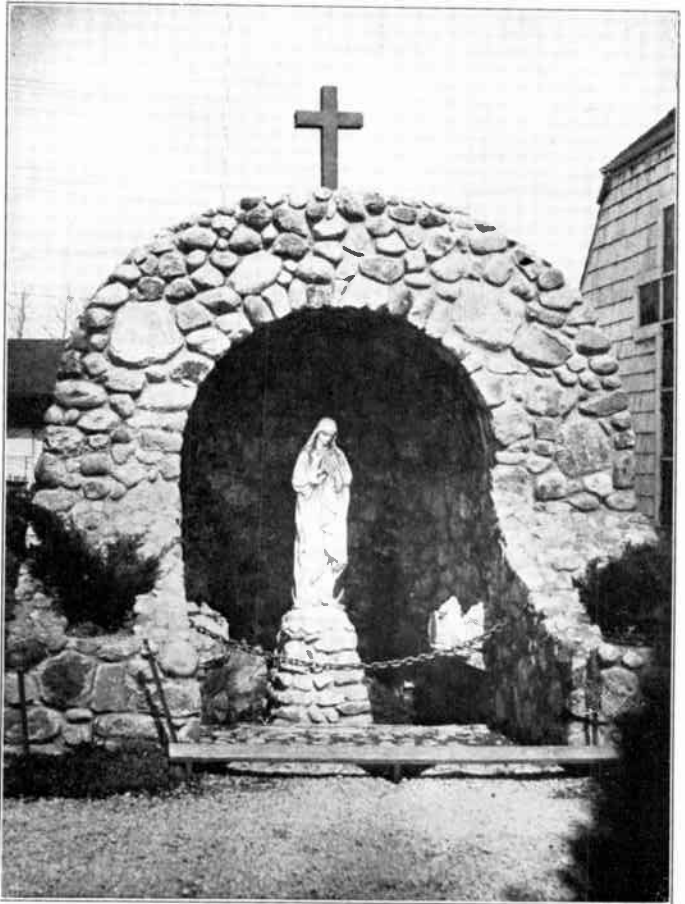
While his agents were arranging his own chain, Father Coughlin supervised the final preparations for a pilgrimage to Lisieuz, France, the home of Saint Therese. He had a hand for everything, this man. Seventy-five members of his Radio League

of the Shrine of the Little Flower, headed by the Very Reverend Conrad Link and the Reverend Reginald Lutomski of Duns Scotus College, sailed from New York on July 9 aboard the Red Star Liner *Lapland*. His mother and father were of the group. They had vainly tried to persuade him to join the pilgrimage and make the trip with them—the vacation would do him a world of good, his mother urged—but the press of Shrine activities bound him close to Royal Oak. These were crucial, critical days for him. On the coöperation of independent radio stations depended his return to the air. That the public wanted him was of little weight. Officials of radio, czars of their domains, held the balance of his career. Not until he was moderately certain of his own hook-up, could he venture away for a pleasurable respite.

There were conferences; there were trips to this city and to that; there was anxious waiting. And to all radio stations which were approached either by Father Coughlin or by Fitzpatrick, there was the statement:

"We pay for everything we ask. We ask no favors. We simply ask the opportunity to buy the facilities of your station."

Early on the morning of August 10, he was summoned out of his bed by a telephone call from the police and was informed that an attempt to rob the Shrine vault was frustrated. Quickly he dressed and drove to his church. He learned that around three in the morning all lights in the brightly illuminated edifice were suddenly turned off; that Joseph Tretter, a night watchman, observing from a near-by post, immediately turned in the alarm for



GROTTO OF LOURDES

the Royal Oak police. A police car cruising in the vicinity responded with rare speed and the bandits were frightened away, escaping unseen. When Father Coughlin arrived he admitted the police to the Shrine. He discovered that the burglars had gained their entrance and exit into the church by means of a jimmied window. A search of the building, however, revealed that the thieves had taken hasty flight and left untouched the more than $5,000 which safely reposed in the vault. The money, Father Coughlin told the police, represented heavy collections made during the previous day's services, and was in the vault awaiting bank deposit that day.

"The bandits were obviously familiar with the church," Father Coughlin informed the police. This was something else to worry about, but nothing to discourage his progress.

For as Father Coughlin believed, without adversity no man ever succeeded. "Adversity's sweet milk, philosophy," wrote Shakespeare. The priest was a philosopher by nature and an ardent admirer of the Bard-of-Avon.

The next day the Philadelphia *Record* printed a story, quoting Father Coughlin as saying that he was organizing a new chain for the winter and that the negotiations were almost completed—that he had been barred from the Columbia chain. The *Record* continued to say, that Columbia officials denied they had barred Father Coughlin because of the nature of his sermons, but that future religious hours in the program would "be filled by ministers selected by bishops and other high officials of the church, rather than by an individual broadcasting week after week."

The following day, Columbia Broadcasting officials publicly signed Father Coughlin's execution papers, and announced widely through the press that they had officially cut him off from their national chain.

"We have decided to abolish all commercial religious broadcasting," the statement read.

The eyes of the radio world were focused on the Shrine of the Little Flower and its radio priest. Speculation was high and keen on the probable outcome. In New York, McClosker worked feverishly to produce results for the crusading pastor, the "Shepherd of the Air." Both he and Fitzpatrick were "friends indeed" to Father Coughlin.

The same day there came from New York, over the International News Service wires, this story signed by "Aircaster":

"Decision by the Columbia Broadcasting System to abolish all commercial religious broadcasting this autumn was actuated principally by the prospect, I am told, of the return to the air of the Rev. Fr. Charles E. Coughlin of Detroit, whose sermons last season drew a record of 400,000 fan letters in a fortnight. Yesterday I asked Columbia officials whether Father Coughlin would return.

" 'Certainly not on a commercial program,' I was assured."

Pat Dennis went to Father Coughlin to check up on the dispatch. He found the radio priest in his new offices in the basement of the Crucifixion Tower (then not officially dedicated) and showed him the clipping.

"What do you say to that, Father?" Dennis inquired.

"That's the story, Pat," Father Coughlin replied. "But my own chain is being arranged and it's partially completed. 'The Golden Hour' will be perpetuated over the air. You can say that my Sunday sermons will start again in October."

"Why not give me an official statement, Father? State your position. Acquaint the public with the facts. The people are interested in you, you know, and your return to the air."

"All right, Pat. Wait a little while, and I'll dictate something for you."

Pat expected to find the priest in a slough of despondency. He was wrong. Father Coughlin was energetic, hopeful, and practically confident of success. If there were those who believed that such a gigantic undertaking "couldn't be done," they would be surprised to find the error of their opinion. This man had determination, persistence, and perseverance. Pat sat around, observing before him the flying fingers of working clerks—Father Coughlin's helpers, the best-paid office assistants in the city. Just a few years ago this was a dream, "an ambitious one's dream," he thought.

"You have to give him credit," Pat mused to himself about Father Coughlin. "He is not discouraged easily."

A firm step approaching from behind told him that the priest was nearing. Pat turned and smiled at Father Coughlin.

"Why the smile, Pat?" he asked.

"I was just thinking how a few years ago I said, '*It can't be done.*' "

Well—Pat roused himself.

"Here it is, Pat. Publish it if you like," and Father Coughlin handed him a full statement of explanation. The radio editor read:

"The Columbia Broadcasting System has officially refused to accept my contract for this coming season. The peculiar thing about it is that they are going to make their donation to someone who hitherto has paid them no money despite the fact that I was the only Catholic clergyman who paid out thousands upon thousands of dollars to the Columbia System for the use of their facilities and who had acquired for them more listeners than any other dozen programs which they presented last year. This last statement is so true that in their advertising to secure new clients to use their system they have used my name in their sales literature. But suddenly neither my name nor my money nor the radio audience who listen to 'The Golden Hour' seems to be valued very highly. If what I said was 'inflammatory,' if the facts were untrue, why didn't the free speech muzzlers rent an hour on the Columbia Broadcasting System to refute me?"

"That's great," Pat answered, colloquially. "How about Bishop Gallagher? Is he amenable to your radio continuance?"

Father Coughlin smiled, his eyes opened wide, his head became more erect, and with extreme pleasure, he answered:

"Bishop Gallagher has instructed me to continue my broadcasting."

Later in the day he announced to the Associated Press that officials of station WJR were arranging an independent hook-up which thus far included ten-

tatively WOR, Newark, N. J.; WGAR, Cleveland; WGR, Buffalo; WLW, Cincinnati; KSTP, St. Paul; WTIC, Hartford; WEEI, Boston; WTAG, Worcester; WCSH, Portland; and WJAR, Providence.

## CHAPTER XX

*"A charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of life."*

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

If the pressure pall bearers and the disgruntled sneerers entertained the slightest probability of silencing from the air the stirring voice of the militant radio priest, they were mistaken. It was their turn now to sit by with bated breath and wait. Father Coughlin was breathing deeply, evenly, calmly—with comparative confidence and satisfaction. He had developed a public; the public clamored for the ecclesiastical actor of unprecedented magnitude portraying an unprecedented rôle. He had thrown his talents into a passing stream and the startling rush of its current regurgitated the striking manifestations of latent power. He had followed an impulse with unshaken belief, and the spontaneity of divinely motivated inclinations, accentuated by a dramatic sense of religious appeal, forged him ahead. He had had a dream, and now it was a living, breathing, inexorable reality. He had seen his brain-baby burst through the swaddling band of infancy into the rompers of steady and sturdy growth, now tugging at his heart and versatility—"the tools to him who can handle them"—for the habit of mature and adult independence. Did the contemptuous, in their wildest moments, believe that such a progeny, eman-

cipated and irrepressible, could be crushed and beaten into oblivion? Did they believe that the combination of a fated dream, a comprehensive intellect, and a religious ambition could be torn asunder and rendered inactive? Father Coughlin wasn't hoping against hope.

With a few stations lined up for his independent chain, so much at least was wiped off the slate of his attentions. It was a pretty fair beginning for his own undertaking, and in the hands of believing friends, it was fated to come to a good end. Within a month, Father Coughlin anticipated the completion of his entire hook-up and the announcement of his radio points of contact. The hardest part of the job was over—"things bad begun make themselves strong by ill," but a job well begun is more than half done. And the crusading priest had more than well begun his mission. He heaved a sigh of relief and plunged into other activities to retain a grip on the pulsating actions of men and women, preliminary to preparations for the approaching broadcasts. A sufficient number of stations had signified their intentions of joining his network, thereby stamping indelible approval and bidding him "God speed." He had no doubt of a reappearance on the air. Station WJR, which had been his key station when he made his unsung, unheralded, modest, and humble debut, would again be the key station of his independently organized chain. There is organization even in religious pursuits, and the priest was an excellent business man, carrying on his shoulders, like an Atlas, a fine head crammed with the concerns of the world.

Through it all ran the placid consciousness of a dominant man. But behind it all towered the silent

and compliant figure of a sympathetic and inspiring, friendly and approving, Right Reverend.

With the initial load of radio cares hauled and safely shelved for the future, Father Coughlin readily accepted the invitation of the New York *American* to stand shoulder to shoulder with General Smedley D. Butler, fighting progressive of the fighting Marines, in aiding the citizens of New York in a concentrated drive against gangster rule and the outlawry of racketeering. New York was America's second largest playground for crime and its breeding, running so close a second to the Windy City, Chicago, that even New Yorkers were raising supercilious eyebrows in horror and fretting disdain.

Nine days later, on August 24—a sultry and sticky red-letter attempt of futility—the priest and the marine opened the mass meeting in Central Park before thousands of spectators. Representatives of social, civic, and political organizations joined with them in underwriting, vainly, the doom of banditry and increased crime—a silk-thread dragnet for an iron-weighted anchor. The crusading priest, and all who spoke, orated in fancy phraseology about the imperative execution of lawlessness. Alas, all berating and scorn, however sincerely raised from the depths of one's soul, was withering and feeble verbiage—as was later to be witnessed—of an energetic but unsuccessful invasion of the impenetrable haunts of the denizens of degradation—the dens of the underworld. Father Coughlin, vigorously religious, had an impelling honesty of purpose in extending a willing hand of helpfulness, despite the fact that his inspired eloquence availed the issue not one scintilla of improvement. However, he was extending far-

ther his already wide radius of information—"nothing of human interest was foreign to him"—for there came to him from the vivid recitals of New York detectives and "under-cover" men for the Manhattan police department, a profoundly conversant realization and a tensely dramatic picture of life in its raw rottenness. It was the seamy side of life, true; the side of life that most leaders of faiths find it more comfortable to disregard, close their eyes to, and shut their minds against in a "Pollyanna" preference for the prescription of sugar-coated pills of spirituality for the good of mankind. Father Coughlin chose to make his religious doses virile, weighted with the marrow and bone of human deficiencies; not to skim the surface, but to dig into the subterranean miseries of life for contrast with the elations of religious rewards.

In the police narrations, he was taken into the ghettos of crime, into the newly-tinseled tenderloin of the apartment-house rackets, into the blazing gangland of retaliating, spurting, sputtering, riveting gunfire. All this made true his newspaper readings, substantiated press headlines and the clamorous cries of editors, made true the sovereignty of crime—the undeniable iniquity born of prohibition. To the interested priest, the "coppers" gave the "low-down" on a situation that has no "show-down." And, in the secret recesses of his mind, the militant, absorbed, concerned, apprehensive, crusading "Shepherd of the Air" packed away all this information for future use. As he was familiar with the Index Expurgatorius, the catalogue of books from which passages marked as against faith or morals must be removed before Catholics may read the books, he became academi-

cally familiar with that part of life that must be expurgated before society may be considered fit and decent for wholesome humanity's dwelling. For such expurgation of evil he became a more vigorous crusader.

To understand the state's control of crime, Father Coughlin went through the New York police headquarters. He was shown the complicated system of files and records of those, unfortunate enough to be caught, who become enmeshed in the toils of the law —criminal chickens, collateral securities for the devastating roosters at large. The priest viewed with entertaining excitement the intricacies of the fingerprinting machinery, the photographic equipment for the "rogues gallery" collection, and the tabulated compartments which list, under individual headings, the sallow-complexioned polygon of crime. As he was stirred and awakened by the imminent criminal cataclysm, he vowed to stir and awaken the listeners of his future network.

"I pledge the utmost of my abilities and influence in opposition to organized crime," he announced. "I promise a never-ceasing attack on their activities and the conditions which aid their nefariousness and condone their villainy."

The priest had an open ear for life's perplexities.

He took the few-hour ride to Baltimore, Maryland, and there brought earlier negotiations to a climax, signing up station WCAO for his chain. Then he hurried back to Detroit and to a conference with Fitzpatrick. The radio manager had much to report and many plans to bare. In the privacy of Fitzpatrick's carpeted sanctum, they joyfully "bargained" and smoked. The radio manager began:

"We have nineteen stations signed up for twenty-seven weeks of broadcasting. The time will be from four to five o'clock every Sunday, beginning October 4. Your total wattage was 85,000 last year. This year it will add to about 164,550 watts. There is, you see, an appreciable increase and a much farther-reaching network. It means that upwards of sixty million people will be able to tune in on your sermons."

Father Coughlin listened carefully, and he was happy.

"Before you begin your broadcasts," Fitzpatrick continued, "I hope to have two more stations lined up, making a chain of twenty-one stations in all—three more than last year. Not bad, Father!"

"Fine, fine, Leo," the priest repeated eagerly. And when he was interested his eyes became like saucers and the little lines of aging dignity played around their corners mischievously.

The hook-up was far beyond his expectations, a remarkable and astounding answer to the deprecatory comment, "It can't be done!" It was the answer to the challenge of the national network, marking a success dictated by a national confidence expressed in the thousands of letters which came to him from Americans, rich and poor, educated and ignorant, young and old. The gauntlet had been hurled at him and he had caught it in its toss.

"What is the complete line-up so far, Leo?" Father Coughlin inquired anxiously. "Are we sufficiently spread over the country?"

"And how!" Fitzpatrick answered colloquially. "You are all set now. Your feature will be carried for an hour over WJR, naturally; WOR, Newark,

New Jersey; WBBM, Chicago; WCAU, Philadelphia; WGR, Buffalo; WGAR, Cleveland; WLW, Cincinnati; KMOX, St. Louis, Missouri; KSTP, St. Paul, Minnesota; WCAO, Baltimore; WFBL, Syracuse, New York; WJAS, Pittsburgh; WNAC, Boston; WEAN, Providence, Rhode Island; WORC, Worcester, Massachusetts; WICC, Bridgeport-New Haven, Connecticut; WDRC, Hartford, Connecticut; WLBZ, Bangor, Maine; and WMBH, New Bedford, Massachusetts."

Fitzpatrick tossed the correspondence to one side and leaned back in his solid mahogany revolving chair. He twirled a yellow pencil in his hand and looked squarely into the priest's face.

"That's some line-up, Father," he commented. "And, believe me, you can make the country sit up and take notice on that chain."

"That's not the point, Leo. I don't want to make anyone sit up and take notice," Father Coughlin spoke disparagingly of the idea.

He wasn't seeking fame—that fleeting, transitory, illusive reflection of fickle Dame Fortune. He wasn't in the priesthood for fame or material gains. In the priesthood there is no hope of worldly or material rewards or honors. There is no sophisticated ambition for advancement in Father Coughlin's profession. As it is a profession of resignation and abnegation, there exists only the ambition to serve the Gospel, preach it, and live by it. Acclaim and glory—such artificialities are for the burdened and worried workaday man to strive after in discontented envy of others.

"I only want to satisfy my loyal listeners," he continued. "If they want my kind of service, if they

want the Truth—however bitter—I want to give it to them. If they don't—well, Leo, without the prayers and the help of the millions, 'The Golden Hour' could never be."

"Want it? Why radio history has never produced anything like it, or that can even be compared to it. Why, piling up millions of listeners the way you have, you're setting a pace that would make a match-maker dizzy in competition."

"Then the people want the truth, Leo—the truth about everything."

"But are you sure you're not biting off more than you can chew? The cost runs up into money, real money, you know—into the thousands—way up into the thousands. Your lines alone will stand a monthly cost of $41,600. And it must be paid for thirty days in advance."

"Well, Leo, my philosophy has always been that if the people are interested, the money will come in. For when voluntary contributions cease to come to the Shrine of the Little Flower, 'The Golden Hour' will sign off graciously; without friends it could not go on; without help and without the prayers of a nation, it could not be. But when must you have some money for payment? And how much?" Father Coughlin inquired, taking his cue.

"Oh, about $6,000 in a week's time will be all right for a starter, Father," the radio manager told him.

Fitzpatrick studied the radio clergyman as he faced him. He couldn't help but think of him as the man of the hour—the priest who evolved from a golden dream a golden hour—the religious crusader who erected from dollar bills (five dollar bills were

rareties) an organization that could easily rival any 'big business' of the day. Likeable Leo, a bystander for the priest's enterprise, admitted to me that many times he doubted the pastor's eagerness in making of religion a business. Fitzpatrick wasn't alone in his skeptical appraisal of the priest's motives. Very many, before and after him, contended similar protests against the radio sermons of the Royal Oak missionary. But Fitzpatrick confessed;

"A few minutes with Father Coughlin, watching his eyes and hearing his voice, drinking in his wisdom and his amazing knowledge, and I was time and time again re-sold on his sincerity and honesty of purpose. I am not doubting him any more."

Such was the hypnotism of the man's personality, the spell of his brilliance, the charm of his manner.

The next morning, bright and early with the daylight, before Fitzpatrick had a chance to light a cigarette and sit back in his comfortable chair preparatory to the day's labors, he was greeted by a special messenger from the priest, who handed him an envelope containing a certified check covering the amount he had quoted. Father Coughlin was always prompt in the payment of his bills, often ahead of the due date. The priest's pay-as-you-go system had worked out advantageously. He had increased his radio power and spread out his radio blanket to tuck under its nestling warmth a universal congregation whose expression of sanguine sentiment had converted his words and phrases into the necessary dollars and cents of expensive expansion. In addition, the priest had incurred with his independent chain a weekly expense of about $6,500 for facilities and some few extra thousands for overhead. He was

faced, at the very start of the 1931 season, with an outstanding weekly expense of some $20,000 worth of obligations, for tolls, time, and the clerical routine of his organization. But the priest had faith in the public; the public had faith in him. "The Golden Hour" was satisfactorily underwritten.

With the modest declaration that the twenty-seven weeks of "The Golden Hour" broadcast did not belong to him or to the Shrine of the Little Flower, Father Coughlin opened the season with a dedication of the ensuing series of radio hours to his God and His teachings and to the devotion of the people of America—all people, irrespective of color or creed. The universal credo of Christianity continued to be the sustaining credo of his air sermons. Again he screened the "spectacle of stark starvation." Again he sounded a clarion call for a reign of charity and the death-knell for greed, in the saving of the country for posterity. From the stagnancy of depression he yanked forth controversial buds that blossomed in his hands. And again his listeners were multiplied under the terms of a lightning change, rapid-multiplication table of incalculable geometrics. The rumor that the "Shepherd of the Air" was not to return to the wave lengths as a militant crusader, as an uncompromising Girolamo Savonarola in an unrelinquishing stand for purity and justice, was quickly dissipated. He found his only justification for an air-existence in the axiomatic belief that he was "pointing the way"; that his sermons, as he made them, might some day benefit the world.

He tried each season to give his audience something new, something that would "hold" them, yet enlighten them. There were his talks on Commu-

nism, his series on the labor question, on unemployment cause and effect. Now, in his new series, "daring a little more as he grew older," he instituted a radio campaign against prohibition in a fight for purity and justice. This campaign broadened into an attack on capitalism. In his portrayal he pitted against the ghoulish activities of political magnates and industrial millionaires, dramatic prologues of the pitiful pittance of the poor, drawn into frightening silhouettes from the brittle pages of Congressional records and printers' ink.

A week later, on October 11, the Shrine of the Little Flower was officially dedicated. A gesture of high tribute was paid Father Coughlin during the dedication of the exquisitely beautiful Charity Crucifixion Tower that Sunday, when Bishop Gallagher spoke from his sick bed in Providence Hospital. They were sincere words of blessing for the Tower which his understanding and sympathy had fostered into being. In his absence, other high church officials did the honors at the Shrine. Among them was Father Coughlin's sincere and interested friend, the Right Reverend Joseph Schrembs, Bishop of the diocese of Cleveland. Wilbur M. Brucker, Governor of the state of Michigan, and Frank Murphy, Mayor of the city of Detroit, also paid the dignified respects of the city and state to the man who had brought more attention to their geographical location than had all the wealth of one of its most prominent citizens.

There at the intersection of Woodward avenue and the Twelve Mile road, which was once the crossroads of religious persecution and faith, stood the Tower in all its religious glory and architectural

CHARITY CRUCIFIXION TOWER

beauty, a monument for all times and a permanent testimonial to the priest's persistence after Truth. It stood in height comparable to a six-story building. Electrical engineers were still experimenting with the perfection of the lighting system. When they had completed their work, a battery of flood lights would illuminate the outside of the building and a powerful beacon would cast a lighted reflection of a cross upon the night sky—a light to shine for miles around the surrounding countryside. A radiant beacon—Christ on the Cross above the entrance and over the carved word, Charity, "to flash upon the inward eye," for passing motorists to behold as they moved their vehicles in opposite directions, up and down the eight-lane roadway of the Twelve-Mile highway. There was the life-size figure of Jesus which was to gaze down protectingly on man. For Jesus, Father Coughlin has been the twentieth-century mouthpiece.

Around the base of the esplanade, stone carvings gave forth the faces of the Archangels. At the head of the sculpture, joining the other sculpturings, stood the erect face of the great Archangel and seraphim, St. Michael; on either side of him were the Archangel Gabriel and the Archangel Raphael. But there in the face of the great St. Michael were the finely chiseled features of Bishop Michael Gallagher, a memorial tribute to one who was a "Captain Courageous." It was a sly but beautiful gesture on Father Coughlin's part. Not until Bishop Gallagher was finished in "eternal stone" was the hallowed evidence of the radio priest's esteem of his superior discovered. A casual glance at the figure and the likeness is lost. But a closer scrutiny reveals the high forehead of the Right Reverend, his thin nose, his slim,

long face, and a firm mouth and a fine head from which peer out two soulful eyes. It was a noble way to write through the ages the appreciation of a humble priest for his beloved Commander.

The Tower, however, was not officially opened to the public until the following Easter Sunday. But there it was, the first unit of the world's only radio church, an exquisite lobby that would eventually lead to an octagonal church with the longest sanctuary in the world and with a seating capacity of 3500. This was achievement!

It can't be done! . . . An ambitious one's dream! . . .

Radio had built and would continue to build a charity church for the charity of others.

In the "little circles" of Detroit, those circles to which come belittlers and unbelievers, scoffers and deprecators, the envious and the disparaging, Father Coughlin was talked of as another "Jerry" Buckley. Buckley had been shot not long before by gangsters because of his radio tirades against their activities and commanding hold on the city affairs. He was one of Detroit's ablest lawyers—fiery, dramatic, and suave. He, too, bought his own time on the air and with a similarly handsome possession of the language slaughtered the "killers" who had been terrorizing the city. He condemned fearlessly the gunmen and desperadoes of the automobile city, bedroom and hide-away for Chicago's underworld. Buckley was a local radio figure of considerable drama and importance, an actor of the William Fallon type in the courtroom. There was considerable *sotto voce* rumor about the motives of his fight against the back-street parasites of society. The fact remains, how-

ever, that he did raise his well-trained voice, that he did use his legal and technical knowledge in decrying their residence and criminal idleness in the city. Early one evening the "boys" of the "mob" shot Buckley down. They riveted his body with bullets as he made an open appearance, without giving him a chance, a twentieth-century ending punctuated by the dramatic flare of a racketeer's flash for revenge.

"Father Coughlin has taken his cue from Buckley," the cry went round the town.

"He had better watch out. They'll be giving him the works, if he doesn't watch out," others "cheerfully" suggested.

Friends hurried to the radio priest and imparted the town's gossip to him.

"Let them come," he stormed back. "Let them come—the vile swine. I will be right here at the Shrine if ever they are looking for me. I won't run away and hide. They won't have to hunt me or track me down," he vehemently challenged.

Father Coughlin was no coward. He did not stab with a glance. He was a brave man who used the steel-edged sword of slicing, slashing, hounding words. And he continued on the air as he had started, bitterly, viciously, vituperatively denouncing America's system which breeds and nourishes richly potential Al Capones, Vincent Colls, Arnold Rothsteins, and kindred madmen born of corruption, mammon, and prohibition.

There was very little done in Royal Oak without a previous consultation with the eminent priest. He helped to solve many of the town's problems, and of his own accord instituted ways and means of alleviating the unemployment situation and suffering.

Father Coughlin offered to finance the grading and cinderizing of Dartmouth road—from the Twelve Mile road to Linwood avenue—and several other streets in the neighborhood of Royal Oak. The city fathers accepted his kindness. Under the priest's specifications, the engineering department prepared plans. A roll call of the town's unemployed was taken. Men were put to work. He preached the Gospel; he practiced it also. Two days later, on November 5, he launched a drive with a check of $500 for the feeding of one thousand needy children of southern Oakland County. He gave the money in the name of God's Poor Society. Dr. C. H. Benning, county health officer, who had watched the children of the county rapidly declining in health because of lack of milk until he could no longer stand by and do nothing, went to the priest and outlined the situation.

"Father, the county needs $15,000 to establish a milk fund. We need your help," Dr. Benning told the priest.

"It is a great idea. I'll back the drive to the limit," Father Coughlin stated. "We'll hold a mass meeting and stimulate the citizenry."

Close to a thousand officials and citizens of Royal Oak jammed the Northwood auditorium and witnessed the passing of the check for the auspicious start of the drive.

"The Shrine will make this donation," he began. "But I, too, feel that I should help. Although my personal means are limited, I will give $5 each week to help out. In addition I will place special ushers in the Shrine each Sunday to take up collections for the fund."

The people were enthusiastic. The fund workers

hastened out the next day to solicit funds. But unemployment had taken its toll of innumerable Royal Oak families. The drive was not going "over the top." It looked as though the county school children would not have milk to fatten their undernourished bodies. Almost three weeks later, another mass meeting was called. There were platform speakers. Father Coughlin, however, sat with the audience. He arose slowly from his seat and moved to the front of the hall beneath the platform. He waved aside the invitation to step up on the platform. He preferred to talk to the people "man to man."

"Folks," he began, "this drive must go through. The little children can't be forgotten nor unfed. They must have their milk. If the fund workers will raise half the $15,000 goal set to feed the hungry little children of southern Oakland County, I will give the other half in the name of the Shrine. If the workers cannot raise $7,500 the Shrine will distribute its $7,500 through its own channels."

The Royal Oak high school hall broke forth into cheers. His words were charged. The workers were stimulated to an instant promise of renewed effort and endeavor. Crowding around the figure of the priest, they assured him that the drive would be a success.

"Wait and see, Father. The goal will be surpassed by at least $2,500."

With the $8,000 promised to the fund by the Shrine, distribution of milk to about 1200 needy, undernourished and below-weight children began on December 3. The drive was a huge success. Such was Father Coughlin's ability to stimulate those who had more to give to those who had less.

## CHAPTER XXI

*"Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent."*

—JONATHAN SWIFT.

FOR the first few months of the season on his own chain, the clergyman, inspired by the voted action for beer and the registered opposition to prohibition by the American Legion in convention, devoted his broadcasts to a discussion of the issue. It ended in a bitter controversy with the dry fanatic, Dr. Clarence True Wilson, general secretary of the Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals of the Methodist Episcopal Church. With no apology for his contumelious regard for the man, but with a convincing and convicting array of facts, Father Coughlin nicknamed Dr. Wilson the "Cæsar" of prohibition. It resulted in a hotly-worded tilt. It was, for Father Coughlin, tantamount to a "show-down." Dr. Wilson assailed the priest's integrity for verification and his accuracy of statements as well. As far as the priest was concerned, it was a fight, not to the draw, but to the finish, to last as many rounds as necessary until a final knock-out blow vindicated him or the Episcopal clergyman. If he took the count, Father Coughlin vowed never to return to the air as a radio preacher. If the towel was thrown to Dr. Wilson, then the victory was the priest's and he could continue with a record for truth unbesmirched. The charges and counter-charges flew as thick and fast as

body punches in a fistic encounter. There wasn't any ring, but the radio audience had ringside seats. Father Coughlin retaliated with a clean uppercut and charged Dr. Wilson with a "submersive attempt" to force him off the air. Dr. Wilson accused the priest of misquoting him, "without verification or attempt at verification." And it was all because of the American Legion convention, Dr. Wilson's defiant "drunken orgy" charge, and Father Coughlin's reprehensive scorn for prohibition generally.

On September 21, vanguards of legionnaires from every part of the country moved into Detroit to the blaring of bugles and beating of drums, swamping every available inch of space, singing and cheering their way, under a riotous pageantry of color and magnificence and glittering banners, to the Olympia Arena. The spectacular thirteenth annual American Legion convention welcomed President Herbert Hoover as the chief guest and wildly applauded his appearance as the principal speaker. To his appeal to "enlist in a war to bring back business stability and prosperity" they responded with howling chorus and an after-cry for beer. Just as the President was about to depart for the special train to return to Washington, someone high in the gallery, above the speakers' stand, began to cry with a resonant shout: "We want beer!" In a second dozens took up the dirge and in a minute it became the deafening hosanna of the attending thousands who packed the convention hall. Shoulders which once ached with gnawing pangs under pack straps, and since have become rounded and stooped over work benches and office desks, straightened into stiff erectness—feet which blistered with soreness, now shuffled with mar-

tial rhythm—the command of the implied "forward march" had been sounded in the "We want beer" ditty. And the delegates, about fifteen thousand of them, forward marched to a vote for a nation-wide prohibition referendum and a demonstration, furiously sincere, in which the dominant motif and thundering musical was:

"We want beer!"

Advocates of prohibition, dry fanatics, scorned the action. They ripped into convention exhibitions and denounced them in words of epithetical vulgarity. Among the bitter foes of the legionnaires was Dr. Wilson. He was in St. Joseph, Missouri, attending a dry conference at this time. From a pulpit in that city, he denounced the Legion convention as the parent of "drunken orgies." Under an Associated Press date line, the Episcopal reformer was quoted as saying:

"There was a marked absence of the sober, well-behaved, typical American citizen. . . . The other crowd is in power. That is why such numbers of staggering drunks disgraced the uniform and yelled for beer."

The next morning, September 28, the eminent clergyman arrived in Kansas City. There, to reporters in interviews, he amplified his pulpit valedictory, and further pictured the repeated exodus of legionnaires from Detroit to Windsor, by way of the tunnel, to carry on their drinking bouts in Canada. He told the press he wasn't "a bit surprised" at the Legion's stand, favoring the repeal of prohibition. The general secretary of the Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals, was further quoted in the press with the opinion that every drinking sol-

dier "is a perjured scoundrel who ought not to represent the decency of the flag."

The last remark precipitated the masterly sermon of Father Coughlin. He had been carefully studying all the attacks made by the drys, Dr. Wilson included, on the Legion's sobriety or rather lack of it in convention assembled. The priest was whipped into action by the proponents of prohibition and their challenging view and review of the question. And, under the title "On Prohibition," he delivered his great masterpiece on October 25, about a month after the Legion bubble. Of the series, of all the sermons he had so far made, this one contained the master's hand and the prophet's eye. It embodied culture, genius, brilliantly-worded contempt; it was a classic of astute preparation, sublime vision, exemplifying the priest's belief that "rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." Tumultuous response followed its deliverance. A wave of sympathy and support for the fearlessness of the cassock-garbed lecturer carried him to ecstatic heights of acclaim. With all his vigor, with all his sincerity, and with a force that reverberated throughout the land, he struck out at prohibitionists, generally, and at those, particularly, who had belittled the Legion convention delegates for drinking. Actually, it was the priest's first comprehensive survey of the question. And under the bludgeon of his pounding words fell the heads of Dr. Wilson; Colonel Callahan, secretary of the Association of Catholics favoring prohibition, and chairman of the Allied Prohibition Board of Strategy, whom he described as "a rather pernicious type of prohibition nuisance"; Bishop James Cannon, Jr., then under indictment by a Federal Grand Jury;

Wayne B. Wheeler; and others. He delivered this controversial sermon after prudent deliberation. But the time had come and the priest had to speak "or forever hold his peace." He reminded his audience, out of courtesy to "The Golden Hour," to weigh and judge the facts impartially and rationally before they jumped to the conclusion to "condemn or praise."

He delved into the historical background of the issue, and maintained that prohibition was born in the Mohammed and not in the Christian religion, as had been erroneously argued. The press carried his discourse under a generous allotment of space. The American Legion–Dr. Wilson tiff was "small" news compared to the scourging prohibition received at the hands of Father Coughlin and its subsequent "pick-up" in the metropolitan dailies of the country.

From the story printed in the *Detroit Times*, the following is an extended excerpt:

"Mohammed, who laid down the law to his followers that women were merely playthings for men, also legislated prohibition in his Koran. . . . For 1,310 years prohibition has been enforced in Turkey and northern Africa, now a land of barbarism where centuries ago it was the seat of culture and scientific and artistic achievement of the world.

"There is not one solitary instance in the Bible where prohibition is defined. Total abstinence and temperance is defined, but not prohibition. That was left to the Koran and present-day dry leaders, Bishop James Cannon, Jr., and his ilk.

"Christ was a wine drinker. He chose to drink wine in the house of Nicodemus. He went on record of performing His first miracle to produce wine at

THE SHRINE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

Cana of Galilee. At the tragic hour when the nails of the cross overshadowed Him, it was wine which He chose even at the Last Supper. If He were living today the proponents of prohibition would call Him a friend of the speakeasies and an associate of the bootleggers. The bride's home at Cana would be termed a blind pig—this home where 'His Disciples began to believe in Him.' If Jesus Christ today should appear at a public marriage and turn water into wine He would be seized on one arm by Bishop Cannon, now under indictment by a jury composed mostly of Protestants for violating the corrupt practise act, and on the other arm by Clarence True Wilson and thrown into jail with murderers and criminals.

"In the same Detroit courthouse where the 'life for a pint' sentence was handed down, Federal Judge Charles Simons recently expressed regret at sentencing to two years a bank official who had stolen $40,000. At the same time the United States government, to compete with foreign shipping lines, placed barrooms on vessels under its control. Thus we had governmental profits from liquor on the high seas and the slogan, 'life for a pint,' on land. Oh, what a fine example this government, under the domination of the Anti-Saloon League, set to the young Al Capones who had the ambition of joining Uncle Sam in his racket."

Father Coughlin took the life of "The Golden Hour" in his hands when he bared his mind of its thoughts on prohibition, attacking, by inference, the domination of the dry law enforcement by men of faiths different from his own. He took the life of the Shrine of the Little Flower in his hands when he denounced Catholic Colonel Callahan. But be-

cause of his independent chain and his independent bearing Father Coughlin could preach freely. And in his freedom of speech, he was crushing to radicals, those who act "contrary to natural laws and contrary to justice." He held that all radicals were not in overalls. "Some wear white collars," he said; "conservatives are often the worst of radicals, while the internationalist is the worst radical." The discourse caused a national furor. Many tirades against prohibition had been given, but never before had such a brilliant autopsy been performed on the dead of the issue. The public ate it up. It was a satisfying meal of choice morsels, hand-picked and hand-washed fruits of research. Here was another Savonarola (one of the most absorbing figures of the fifteenth century in Florence, an humble Dominican friar, "who, by the power of his eloquence, for a short time fairly controlled the destinies of the city"). Here was another Savonarola, "a Christian as well as a patriot," to sadly muse on the iniquities of man and voice his impassioned reflections. Here was another Savonarola, "mingling figures of sublimest imagery with reasonings of severest accuracy, at one time melting his audience to tears, at another freezing them with terror." Here was another Savonarola, who, "then, no longer restrained the impulse of his oratory, but became the mouth-piece of God."

The Florentine friar, his preachings and personality are indeed comparable to those of the Royal Oak crusader. There stands between them a marked resemblance of purpose, temperament, vision and independence of thought and action. Further than that, however, I dare not go in the comparison.

J. A. Symonds, noted biographer, writes of Savonarola:

"... filling the Dome of Florence with denunciations, sustaining his discourse with no mere trick of rhetoric that flows to waste upon the lips of shallow preachers, but marshaling the phalanx of embattled arguments and pointed illustrations, pouring his thought forth in columns of continuous flame ... again quickening their souls with prayers and pleadings and blessings that had in them the sweetness of the very spirit of Christ. ... His sermons began with scholastic exposition; as they advanced, the ecstacy of inspiration fell upon the preacher, till the sympathies of the whole people of Florence gathered round him, met and attained, as it were, to single consciousness in him. He then no longer restrained the impulse of his oratory, but became the mouthpiece of God. ..."

And further, from the writings of W. Dinwiddie, we learn that Savonarola "would not be entrapped."

"Meanwhile the preacher preached. ... Many began to talk of him as mad, but there was a method in his madness, and no one, perhaps, discerned more clearly the method of that madness than Lorenzo himself. ... His discourses ranged widely over subjects that affected all classes. Nothing escaped him. ... The corruptions of the State and of society, with the oppressions and immoralities of their accepted rulers—all had had their due place in his vivid pictures of existing evil, and his overwhelming blasts of a judgement that was sure and soon to come. ... The growing and violent diversity of feelings which he aroused appears to have resulted at one time in a passing weakness—a resolve to

modify or change his sermons. But this hesitation, this fear, was only momentary; his fierce indignation burst forth with greater force than ever."

Savonarola did not deal in generalities. Neither did Father Coughlin. Savonarola described in plain language every vice; he laid bare every abuse, so that a mirror was held up to the souls of his hearers, in which they saw their most secret faults "appallingly betrayed and ringed around with fire." The same can be said of the Royal Oak priest.

Savonarola and the strong government of Lorenzo de Medici!

Father Coughlin and the strong government of Herbert Hoover!

The militant priest, however, was unmindful of the governmental scrutiny of his prohibition discourse. It had been read, duly approved by Bishop Gallagher, and delivered on schedule. He was wholly concerned with Dr. Wilson and his criticism of the American Legion. There was no spirit of compromise. They stood as Father Coughlin found them—charges of drunken rottenness—and he aimed to vindicate the veterans, as once before he had championed their cause. Now he would herald their claim under a philosophical banner of vitriolic vengeance. With the general secretary, the priest had no direct intercourse. The disputation was carried on by correspondence. Father Coughlin naturally used the radio hour for replies to the Episcopal clergyman's slur on the legionnaires as "perjured scoundrels." Two weeks after his sermon "On Prohibition," the priest went into his stride, and brought forth from "the groaning mountains" of his thoughts

a lashing, whipping, acrimonious retort to Dr. Wilson's allegation. Under the borrowed title "Perjured Scoundrels," lifted from the dry-clergyman's vocabulary, Father Coughlin launched a concentrated attack on the doctor, himself, an attack of hell-revealing bitterness. As a result of the sermon, Dr. Wilson took his frequently-used pen in hand and wrote to the radio stations, complaining that the radio priest had not investigated the facts, charging that Father Coughlin had made no attempt at verification of the statements, and that they were "false in their entirety." He repudiated the charges that he had referred to convention exhibitions as "drunken orgies" or to the legionnaires as "perjured scoundrels," or that he ever used language of a similarly descriptive nature. Dr. Wilson expressed concurrence of sentiment with the Columbia Broadcasting System which had denied the Royal Oak pastor renewal of contract over their nation-wide network, and intimated that Father Coughlin was attempting to "arouse prejudice" against Protestant organizations—a ridiculous inference, since the bulk of the priest's listeners and contributors were Protestants. Necessarily, he would not bite the hand that was feeding the Shrine of the Little Flower. Nor did the priest ever hold any grudges for varied faiths. It was the very thing he wished to eradicate when he took to the air—unceasingly to blot out religious bigotry. Dr. Wilson's letters to radio stations, however, were not to go unanswered.

In Boston, Dr. Wilson's communications to managers of stations were construed as a "plot" hatched in the minds of the "drys" to prevent Father Coughlin from making an appearance in the Massachusetts

capital for a radio address. The priest, at the personal invitation of Dick Dunn, manager of the Boston Garden, former Detroiter and friend of Father Coughlin, familiar with his popularity and ability, was slated to appear in Boston Sunday afternoon, December 6. He was scheduled to broadcast from the North Station terminal arena in lieu of the Royal Oak sanctuary. Multitudes were expected to flock to the Garden to see the priest "in the flesh." Dunn was making all arrangements for the event. It was his idea in the first place. Dunn, a showman and promoter, was already counting the shekels that would accrue from the priest's visit. Father Coughlin had built up an audience of millions throughout New England. It was a safe wager that trainloads of interested and admiring listeners would make steady use of the Boston & Maine railroad to crowd the Garden mecca to see and hear the priest in action. He was to make his address over station WNAC, one of the stations which had been carrying his sermons throughout the season for Greater Boston "radioites." Announcement of the alleged dry plot was made on November 21 (Dr. Wilson's communication was dated November 20) by the Crusaders, a country-wide, anti-prohibition organization, with a women's auxiliary of growing membership and growing importance. Colonel Ira L. Reeves, former New Jersey prohibition administrator, and one of the leading and ardent Crusaders in the country, personally appealed to the radio stations and their executives, requesting that they ignore the demands of the dry elements against Father Coughlin. John Shepard, 3d, who controls station WNAC, and a friend indeed to the erudite clergyman-lecturer, ad-

mitted that he had received a circular letter that an attempt to bar the priest would be made. But the wise Mr. Shepard announced to reporters:

"We run our radio and strive to adapt our programs to meet the desires of the public. We certainly do not consider that any one element represents the general public."

The reporters went to good-looking, smartly-dressed promoter, Dick Dunn, in his tucked-away office at the Garden. They brought the tidings of the "submersive attempt" to him. Frankly he admitted having such authentic information about a movement to block the priest's appearance. Beyond that he wouldn't go in his remarks. The reporters returned to their respective offices and wrote stirring stories about the attempted and quiet move to prevent the priest's appearance in the city, charging the drys with authorship. The public was firmly convinced that a sinister plot kept Father Coughlin from their charming city. The rest of the story didn't "make" the news columns. It was too touchy, and a situation that editors very often find necessary to cloak rather than reveal.

In the interim, Dunn kept the wires hot to Royal Oak. He had been hopeful of bringing to the Hub the radio priest. And over the long-distance telephone, he acquainted Father Coughlin with the details of the progress of the visit.

The publicity, thought Dunn, was "great stuff" preparatory to the appearance of the "air-priest" at the Garden. With feverish excitement, he phoned Father Coughlin.

"But did you get permission for my coming into the Boston diocese as a speaker?" the priest inquired.

"Don't worry, Father. Everything will be all right. We can fix that without any trouble," Dunn assured him.

"But remember, Dick, you must get that permission first. It is customary, you know, and the usual courtesy."

"Well, all right, Father."

Father Coughlin smiled when he dropped the receiver. He felt, somehow, in the place where "hunch-feelings" are usually lodged, that he never would make that trip to Boston as a lecturer.

A few days later, Dunn phoned him again. There was a sadness in his voice, a sadness tinged with bitterness. His positiveness about the permission had melted into thin air, and he had to report failure to Father Coughlin. He was unable to figure out the why of the refusal, but he had to relay what he thought would be disappointing news to the priest. But Father Coughlin took the tidings good-naturedly.

"You must have known, Father. Nothing doing in your coming to Boston to speak," Dunn repeated to him. "Did you hear anything? When I broached the subject of your visit to the proper authorities, there were no two ways about the refusal."

"I thought so, Dick," Father Coughlin laughed. "That's why I wanted to be sure you had the permission before I started out. We must abide, naturally, by the churchman's wishes."

And although Father Coughlin visited Boston at another time on radio matters, he never entered the city as a speaker. From that time on, Father Coughlin refused to accept speaking engagements outside the sanctuary of the Shrine of the Little Flower.

Meanwhile unscrupulous persons were using the name of the Royal Oak priest for illicit gains. Word reached him in the quiet of his rectory, while he was engaged in study, that a number of men throughout Greater Boston were canvassing the territory, selling statues, books, and other merchandise in his name, claiming that the money given them was for him to keep broadcasting. If his fame had brought glory to religion, it had also brought forth racketeering of his name, racketeering that he had so viciously denounced. But there was no trifling with this man, a visionary and a priest, whose eyes burned from constant wrestling with philosophy, whose jaw-bone was firm and determined, and whose full mouth was made for rapid, impassioned speech. At once he dispatched a press notice to the city.

"There is no need of my lining up racketeers or depending upon millionaires for the continuance of this work. It is all carried on through the free-will offering of small amounts contributed by the radio audience directly to the Shrine," he announced.

A few weeks later, Father Coughlin reopened the issue of Dr. Wilson's attack on the veterans. There had been considerable correspondence between the two. The radio stations were familiar with the duel of words between them and the priest sought to find the answer to "What is Truth?" Under this title, he laid bare to his radio audience the details of the whole disagreement. The priest would not let go by, unchallenged, the Episcopal's charge that he lacked verification of facts before he stepped before the microphone. On his acquittal by the public hinged the continued life of "The Golden Hour." Father Coughlin could have taken the easiest way and al-

lowed the controversy to die a natural death. But through his calm faith shone the persevering devotion to Truth and an unhidden hatred for all wrong. In the light of what followed, the priest was thoroughly justified in calling to account the Episcopal clergyman who publicly maligned him. Since they were of different faiths, it had to be naturally stressed that the controversy was in no way a religious issue. A misconstrual would, of course, have been ruinous.

"It is confined to the moral problem of prohibition," the priest announced over the air, December 13.

Analysis of the issue was slightly involved, demanding of the listeners undivided attention. The public was immensely intrigued by the verbal duel between the fighting pastor and the avowed dry. It became a gladiatorial contest with Dr. Wilson bungling the strike of the sharp-pointed saber, and missing the ample frame of the radio priest. With sheafs of documents, telegrams, and letters, results of his dogged determination to reach the bottom of the attack, Father Coughlin stepped before the metal disc. He quoted from the Kansas City *Journal-Post* a statement reported as an interview with Dr. Wilson in which he was quoted:

"Any man who takes the oath to defend the Constitution and then flaunts it openly is a perjurer and scoundrel who disgraces himself and his uniform."

Next he read from the weekly "clip-sheet" of Dr. Wilson's temperance organization, a similar statement using the phrase "perjures himself" but not directly aimed at soldiers. And from a third document, a letter, he read the offer of the Kansas City *Journal-Post* reporter to submit an affidavit that the

Episcopal clergyman had used the words "perjurer and scoundrel" in his attack on the Legion the day after the legionnaires voted anti-dry. So had Father Coughlin dug into files and clippings for his foundation and substantiating proof of facts.

"When the decency and liberty of our nation are jeopardized, truth must be preserved at any cost," he stated. It was a singular victory for the priest. He knew what he was talking about. The public's faith could not be shattered by the innuendoes and sly intimations of Dr. Wilson's expressed derogation of the integrity of the man whose "torrent of eloquence" was "controlling destinies" and moulding thought. If a priest is entitled to a feeling of pride, then Father Coughlin was proud of his veracity and accuracy of statements. Squarely and honestly he had summoned his opponent to the bar of justice.

"If the facts exonerate Dr. Wilson, I will cease, immediately, my weekly broadcasts," he said frankly.

But the facts did not exonerate the dry leader. They vindicated the Royal Oak priest.

If his sermons were strong, they had to be in order to impress upon a public the enveloping and destructive evils.

"I am not a radical at all," he flung back at his accusers. "If there are those who think so, they are self-deceived. In all the time I have been broadcasting I have never made a radical statement. There is no radicalism in me. I have never acted contrary to natural laws or contrary to justice."

Summing up his prohibition broadcast, a subject which he pushed aside temporarily after his ended controversy, he stated, recalling the trial of Christ:

"If the prohibitionists prefer to be dry, I profess to be drier than they in that I advocate the elimination of the ten thousand blind pigs which their policies have multiplied. . . . Annas and Caiaphas cared more to perpetuate themselves in power and to advocate the continuance of the policies of the Pharisees than they did to obtain justice for the oppressed masses of the people."

Father Coughlin had the "bull by the horns." There was no letting go. He was "in" up to his neck. There were times when he would have gladly relinquished all and retired to the quiet and peace of a priest's study to converse with the classical minds in reverie, to find the calm and comfort that come from spiritual introspection. But an eager, clamoring public urged him on, and on, and on—like the ice-boat which carried his bob-sled over the mass of glassy ice on Lake Huron—to only God knows where!

For under the habit of his profession, there beats the heart of a simple man, a holy man of benignity and grace, of kindness and beautiful understanding; the heart of a priest and of a visionary, who has taken into his arms the cares and worries of a workaday world; the heart of a man with pure motives and crushing eloquence.

"A MAN OF KINDNESS AND BEAUTIFUL UNDERSTANDING"

## CHAPTER XXII

*" . . . and by keeping silence we would seem to neglect the duty incumbent upon us."*

—Pope Leo XIII.
*Rerum Novarum.*

In a recent issue of *Time,* under the heading, Miscellany, this reprinted couplet:

"The good but starve; the order of the day
Is prey on others or become a prey."

—discovered in bold, scarlet letters painted on Grant's Tomb, Riverside Drive, New York City—engaged my interest because of its poignant pertinence to the cause which Father Coughlin had so heroically espoused. Editors of *Time* attributed its authorship to "an anonymous fanatic." However, my sympathies favor the "fanatic." The words might have been spoken by the crusading priest, for surely they prefaced his thoughts about this generation. In chronicling the prophecies, the ringing truths, and the behaviorism of the magnetic personality of this daring man, there is a merited privilege, I feel, for placing these lines in his life's story. A similar sentiment Father Coughlin committed to me, a sentiment that permeated his sermons and found ample expression in his inspired and challenging defense of the masses. The couplet, therefore, is especially fitting as a beginning for this chapter, for

with the new year the modern apostle—not a reformer, but a revealer—took up the cudgels for that great public which is undeniably the backbone of any nation, in the aged and time-worn issue of capital versus labor. He named the provision of jobs as the inescapable duty of the government, that individual citizens might live. The welfare of the laboring classes *must* be protected, he stressed mightily, in an echoing condemnation of the excessively rich. Jeremiah, the great prophet who was stoned to death for discharging his duties as the special figure of Christ, lamenting in his charity for his persecutors:

> "Our inheritance is turned to aliens: our houses to strangers. We are become orphans without a father: our mothers are as widows. We have drunk our water for money: we have bought our food. . . . Our fathers have sinned and are not: and we have borne their iniquities. . . . We have fetched our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the desert. . . . The joy of our heart is ceased: our dancing is turned into mourning. . . . The crown is fallen from our head. Woe to us, because we have sinned. . . ."

was no mightier than his modern mouth-piece. Isaiah wailing:

> "A voice of the people from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies . . ."

was no more prophetic than the modern mouth-piece. Ezekiel, whose name is synonymous with the Strength of God, who was contemporary with Jeremiah and likewise one of the four greater prophets, visioning:

"And I have spoken in my zeal and in the fire of my anger, that in that day there shall be a great commotion upon the land of Israel."

was no more accurate than his severely-accurate modern mouth-piece. Daniel, so renowned for his wisdom and knowledge that he became a proverb among the Babylonians, with a holiness so very great even in his very childhood, deciphering the handwriting on the wall, in his judgement:

"O thou that are grown old in evil days, now art thy sins come out which thou has committed before, in judging unjust judgements, oppressing the innocent and letting the guilty go free, whereas the Lord saith: 'The innocent and the just thou shalt not kill.' "

was to be found re-incarnated in the mouth-piece of the Shrine of the Little Flower.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—prophets all—were persecuted for their prophecies, though they cried out an authentic mission. Father Coughlin, too, was venomously maligned and impeached for his preachings that mirrored the inequalities of opportunities, though he spoke as a sanctioned religious mouth-piece commanded by his bishop. By many the priest was stamped as extremely radical, an agitator, a follower of Lenin of Red Russia, a follower of Ramsay MacDonald of Great Britain, of American Senators La Follette and George William Norris. They said of him that he was a Red, waving a crimson flag of revolutionary intent and influence concealed under the purity of his priestly robes, blowing a fife and beating a drum of rebellious urging against authority in sermons which were both terrorizing and alarming—he who had so bitterly

preached against radical Communism and the mushroom spread of its activities. But at all these fulminations, Father Coughlin smiled sadly. Deep inside he knew the fallacy of such criticism and, softheartedly, he accepted the irony of it all.

He was no follower of any of these men. He was a follower of Pope Leo, of Pope Pius—he was a follower of Christ. And when he stated his position he spoke convincingly, though there was no need of any apology. The two million letters which came to the Shrine during this season mutely bore him out. If unfamiliarity with apostolic thought charged him with radicalism, he had only to turn—and he did many times—to the letters of the two Supreme Pontiffs, wherein there was pressing support for his discourses. The ravings and rantings of the disagreeing minority availed them nothing. For Father Coughlin, endorsed by Bishop Gallagher, continued to "point the way" as Pope Leo had pointed the way for the "venerable brethren" a century before. Propaganda, yes, but propaganda for the good of humanity and the benefit of the world. Millions who would not read the writings of Pope Leo, could and would listen, through the modern medium of the radio, to the dramatic presentation of Catholic thought in review of present-day conditions. If his ideas were not new, they were, from every angle, original in their appeal.

It can't be honestly claimed that Father Coughlin was really happy because of the unprecedence in which he had stamped himself on the national consciousness of the people. But it can be said that he was satisfied with the feeling that in some degree he was opening the eyes of a drowsy populace to the

"AT THE PIANO IN HIS SIMPLE BUNGALOW"

monstrous dragons of political and social crime and corruption that aimed to keep them shut.

Frankness, which to him was a supreme virtue, was to his enemies a gross vice. The "greedy hogs," whose monopoly of wealth was reducing to literal starvation the millions who had slaved in the amassing of the fortunes, opposed the priest and his sermons. They did not like him—to put it mildly. It was to laugh! Little Father Coughlin cared about the personal feelings these millionaires held for him or his personality. They had robbed a country of its livelihood, and the voice of John the Baptist, crying out to the Pharisees and the Sadducees who came to his baptism on the shores of the Jordan:

> "Ye brood of vipers, who hath shewed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance."

was no more powerful in its iron grip than the voice of the Royal Oak disciple which thundered through a metal disc at the covetous capitalists whom he charged with courting national disaster.

Over the air Father Coughlin swayed with an iron voice of knowledge. In daily life, he was abundantly modest and religiously humble. At every opportunity he drew from the book shelves in his rectory—a simple, wooden bungalow surrounded by a decorative bed of flowers within a well-kept wooden fence—his treasured volume of apostolic letters to refute at the slightest provocation the self-deceived as to the source of his inspiration. Over and over he read this paragraph from Rerum Novarum, not to forget the many others previously mentioned, which assured him that he was following in the right

direction, preaching as had preached the head of his church:

"In any case we clearly see, and on this there is general agreement, that some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class: for the ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence by degrees it has come to pass that workingmen have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different guise, but with the like injustice, still practised by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labour and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than slavery itself . . . the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workmen's earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing; . . . the first thing of all to secure is to save unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making. . . . It necessarily follows that each one has a natural right to procure what is required in order to live; and the poor can procure that in no other way than by what they earn through their work. Christian workingmen must do one of two things: . . . unite their forces and shake off courageously the yoke of so unrighteous and intolerable an oppression. . . .

At the time being, the condition of the working classes is the pressing question of the hour; and nothing can be of higher interest to all classes of the State than it should be rightly and reasonably settled."

Father Coughlin had no intention of pitting class against class. He did not consider that it was radical to tell the truth about men—about groups of men who had piled up fortunes having driven the small business man out of his business, having denied him his employment, having robbed him of his opportunity to develop a sufficiency for life and its comparative comforts. The condition of the working class, pressing in 1891, was in 1932 still a harassing and pressing situation, beyond all tolerance for those in this generation who must eat to live and have shelter. He was telling the truth though the truth was bitter, galling the throats of those who had to swallow its pill, to those whom he held responsible for the want, the suffering, and the injustice now known in America—the bankers and the greedy, hogging industrialists. I have quoted at great length from the encyclical letters to demonstrate that Father Coughlin found the basis of his discourses in the sanctified declarations of his Superiors, that his thoughts conformed unequivocally with the thoughts spoken before him. That he was the first cassock-garbed man to use the radio to spread universally the teachings of the two Popes, adds measurably to his ingenuity and originality. I have quoted extensively to refute the arguments that the priest was in any sense radical. If he is to be considered so, then the same accusation must likewise be lodged against Pope Leo and Pope Pius, who

in 1931, forty years afterward, embodied Pope Leo's thoughts under the heading, "The Reconstruction of the Social Order." It is possible that Father Coughlin, were he simply Charles Edward Coughlin, an ordinary man of ordinary employment, would never have attained such distinction, such acclaim, nor such derision in minority circles. Garbed in the robes of Catholicism he became a target for the displeased who charged him with using his religious position to an alarming advantage. For Catholicism he achieved innumerable regenerated adherents. He did not aim to achieve converts. Nor did he. Symbol for the truth, his membership in the priesthood accentuated merely his enslavement to veracity and accuracy.

Nor did he, in his reachings out, stop at mere man, if one singles out from the herd of the laity the President of these United States and elevates him to the position of mighty loftiness.

There came to the priest information that in 1912 when Herbert Hoover was a mining promoter who for some years had been a resident of Great Britain, he had contributed an article to *The Mining Magazine,* May issue, at the instigation of its editor, T. A. Rickard. It was a periodical published in Salisbury Place, London, England. Father Coughlin, one cool, breezy Friday afternoon in February, left his warm rectory study and drove to Detroit, the Public Library his destination. For several hours he pored through the periodicals of the English publications until he found a compiled collection of *The Mining Magazine* for 1912. He fingered the pages eagerly until he reached the May issue, the one he wanted, the one he needed as a basis for his

sermon two days later. Between the covers he discovered that on May 7, an article headlined, "Economics of a Boom" was signed by H. C. Hoover. With due permission Father Coughlin had the article photographed, and when the photostatic copy was delivered to him, he pored over its contents. He had the authorship of the article duly authenticated and verified as being that of President Hoover and then he began on his Sunday sermon. I have a photostatic copy of the article before me as I write. It covers approximately three pages of double-columned, single-spaced type and is addressed to "The Editor." From the letter over Hoover's name, Father Coughlin interpreted the writer's attitude as one of contempt for the modest investor. And on February 14, over his national network, Father Coughlin sent his ringing voice to the homes of America, publicly charging the President of this country with "ardent zeal to protect the banking class—the banker's friend, the Holy Ghost of the rich, the protective angel of Wall street." Greater courage than this hath no man! Especially a man who wears the cassock around his body and the biretta on his head. A priest in politics, went forth the cry!

Father Coughlin was fully aware of the irreparable damage it would cause, not only to the chief executive of the country, but to the Republican Party of which he was the head, by right of eminent domain. So was Bishop Gallagher fully cognizant when he approved the priest's discourse of February 14 and said:

"So shall it be."

It was given despite any fear of consequences, for the priest was amply prepared for the rebound. He

had the photostatic copy of the magazine and Hoover could not retract what could be shown in black and white.

It was a bombshell, this broadcast—as the priest had anticipated—which wrecked and splintered the peace and calm of mind of the ruling head of America to the estimated loss of a million votes, by those in the know. And all Hoover could do was sit back in the lonely quiet of his White House study, cup in his hand the face which he so disliked having photographed in close-up views, and wonder about the future and the time of possible re-election. Undeniably, Father Coughlin was not only swaying the social and religious consciousness of the people of the nation, but its political emotions as well.

Father Coughlin had announced over the air, after reading from the magazine an excerpt I shall quote anon:

"In 1912, Mr. Herbert Hoover termed as 'idiots' those people who would listen to the suave salesman talk of promoters who by deceit and subterfuge coaxed money from widows as was done here in Royal Oak and elsewhere."

Millions who had tuned in on the radio priest, whether they deemed him discreet or indiscreet, nevertheless listened with undivided interest. What next? What next would Father Coughlin dig out from hidden files and dusty journals to make comparable to 1932 activities?

The paragraph he read from the magazine was this:

"It is quite possible that the Blank mine may be capitalized at 1,000,000 pounds and the Insiders may sell the shares to the Outsiders at that figure,

but the 880,000 pounds representing the difference—if we assume that the mine should fail absolutely—is not itself an economic loss. It simply means that this much of the national wealth was transferred from one individual to another. It might result in a decrease in national wealth if the 880,000 pounds, or any part of such purchase of the mine were removed from this kingdom. . . . Further, from an economic point of view, this 880,000 pounds of capital in the hands of the Insiders is often invested to more reproductive purpose than if it had remained in the hands of the idiots who parted with it. . . ."

So disturbed was President Hoover over the priest's discourse, that bright and early the next morning he sent special secret service men into the archives of the Congressional Library with peremptory orders to confiscate every such *The Mining Magazine* that could be found on the shelves. Even this clandestine move on the part of the President was communicated to Father Coughlin by an intimate friend, whose daughter was employed in that branch of government work.

And with the tidings came the friend's interjection:

"Father, you have the President worried."

It was while relaying this information to me, that Father Coughlin nicknamed himself a "religious Walter Winchell," laughingly revealing that he had vigilantes all over the country who supplied him with valuable data on the nation's housekeeping. And as he related the incident, he sat in his high-up office of the newly dedicated Tower, his eyes peering through the scrolled windows. He, Father Coughlin, had upset the composure and mien of the great Herbert Hoover, the saviour of the Republican Party and the

pinnacle of Washington's "Merry-Go-Round." He, who but a few years ago was an obscure cleric, a national "nobody," was now able to escort a government to a ringside seat at the edge of a precipice. There was no premeditated malice either in his intentions or actions. He was simply telling the truth as nobody before him had ever told it in this country, telling it about anybody and everybody regardless of position or importance, creed or wealth. The public had a right to know of the contributing factors to the imminent economic debacle. It is true that constantly happening national predicaments—the savagery of crime and the black-browed plottings of avenging hunger—kept him supplied with woeful illustrations of his prophetic vision of a tantalizing future. From the signs of the times he created the horizon of the to-morrow, a fearfully fraught to-morrow for the jobless, a to-morrow of plentiful abundance for the undeserving—a democracy which prohibition has made "safe for the bootleggers," he averred.

And while millions hung on to every word of the radio priest, visioning an enchanted image of the one who spoke with endowed divinity, few knew "the man," his face, his figure, his daily routine. He kept much in the background when away from the microphone. He lived simply and inconspicuously, with a retirement that was in keeping with this soulful humility and lavish modesty. Recreation he found with his dog, Pal, a huge Dane of man-size proportions; or at the piano in his simple bungalow; or at a game of bridge with his assistants; or at an evening meal with his adoring mother and father. In these later years, they saw little of him. He had created a public to which he virtually belonged and for whom

THE RADIO PRIEST AND HIS DEVOTED DOG

he must continue to dim his eyes in study that they might be informed. The work of the Shrine—mountainously growing, proportionate to the increase of listeners—demanded many hours, leaving him only precious moments in pleasurable surcease. But he loved (and I use the word advisedly), he loved the work of the Shrine. It possessed him and he possessed it. He had four private secretaries who answered his every beck and call, but the job was his, to be done only as he could do it, if the radio audience was to be maintained. There was the work of God's Poor Society, the figment of his charitable intuition, and this work he watched and supervised. For the poor must be taken care of, he maintained, if every last dollar has to be spent on their clothes and their shelter; the completion of the Shrine was secondary.

The great business of Father Coughlin's life was "to be, to do, and to do without."

The lion speaks; the mouse looks on.

The child of Fate was now a man of Destiny.

## CHAPTER XXIII

*"In illa hora dabitur vobis quid diceris—*
*In that hour it shall be given unto*
*you what to say."*

—FATHER COUGHLIN.

SOME time after seven o'clock, Tuesday, March 1, when dusk deepened through twilight to darkness and the Sourland Hills of Hopewell, New Jersey, were veiled, there swept by with sceptred pall "the crime that couldn't happen." The crime that bolted out of the nothingness into the nothingness, freighted the entire civilized world with anguish and sobbing alarm, and baffled the collected police talent of the entire nation. The baby son of Anne Morrow Lindbergh and Colonel Charles Augustus Lindbergh—Lone Eagle and first air conqueror of the hazardous Atlantic Ocean—was snatched from his nursery crib in the isolated mansion of his parents, by human fiends whose forms evaporated with the air. And whose identity, swallowed up by the earth, no doubt is never to be known. Overnight, there were the frantic gestures of tragedy and mourning. The business of a great nation was temporarily halted that her agencies and forces of justice might be assembled and actively brought into play in apprehending the most vicious and despicable abductors in the annals of contemptible crime; kidnapers that howled with ghostly glee because they were not and are never to be captured. Criminologists termed it "the perfect

crime." But its perfection left in its wake the horror of agonizing suspense, of sorrow, and bereavement; of mental and physical torture, ultimately climaxed by insolent *murder*; and the abhorrence of a confession of weakness by a world power, that of necessity curtsied in deference to the sovereignty of organized gangland.

Newspapers, cemented under a common interest, strained every facility within their power, in their offers of assistance, to track down the culprits of the crime. They opened up page after page after page in catering to the demands of the unrestrained emotions of a saddened and aroused world public. Not even the World War—that debacle of wretchedness and human slaughter—was so exploited as was this criminal offense while it remained the paramount news of the day, the week, the months. Altruistically motivated, editors dropped their alleged callousness, cynicism, and hard-boiledness and became the sorrowing fathers of the nation in keeping alive the story, optimistic by hoping that the glare of publicity and the pounding proddings of print might ferret out the perpetrators. Millions upon millions of words, incalculable in number, were sent out overnight to the far corners of the globe to satisfy the lurid, dramatic, heart-rending response to this abduction and to round out a sobbing, pitiful, fruitless appeal for the safe return of the "nation's baby." The conservative press dropped its cloak of reservedness in treating the kidnaping as news. The less conservative journals went the limit in their handling. And despite all these and other agencies of assistance, police science was incapable of coping with the crime or effect an intelligent understanding of its motives

or authorship. From out of the night and into death the baby-boy, golden-locks of the country's "beloved young couple" was successfully grabbed by clawing hands.

All that week, Father Coughlin was weighed down by a concerning problem of his own, a pressing decision pertinent to the Shrine. But he, too, was steeped to the lips in misery over this dastardly figment of a warped mentality and a beastly heart. He did not think, however, to make the kidnaping the subject of his radio discourse. All week his mind wandered to other things and when Saturday rolled round, there was no prepared sermon. He was restless and troubled. He was unable to concentrate and buckle down to the labor of the morrow. Yet the haunting discourse gave him no peace and finally forced him into thought. From the incoherency of his feelings, somehow he eked out a sermon. It was Saturday afternoon; although the address displeased him, he pushed it into the top drawer of his desk and slid out of his office into the cool out-of-doors to walk and to inhale the crisp, March air. Saturday night he re-read the discourse in the quiet of his bungalow study. The written words, peering at him from the bristling pages, tantalized him with their inadequacy of expression and sentiment, and incurred his ire. He paced the floor and wracked his brain for an inspiration. Finally he gave up in disgust. Revengefully he tore the manuscript into shreds and tossed its bits into the wastebasket. To himself, he muttered from narrowed lips:

"This is terrible."

But there was no use trying another. Stubbornly his mind refused to function. There was nothing else

to do but forget the sermon for the time being. So he turned to his books to drive out of his head the pressing discourse and to find stimulation in what others had pieced out in their genius before him. Saturday, close to midnight—and still no sermon for the morrow—no sermon for the morrow—sixteen hours more of night and day—no sermon for the morrow. The thoughts pounded in his mental recesses. Millions would tune in and there would be no inspiring, eloquent, fighting indignation for shame and hypocrisy, no ringing pity for the poor and the unfortunate, no denunciation of wrong, no eulogy of right—no sermon sufficiently reputable, in keeping with his past performances. Well, he would remain awake. Perhaps, from the night hours, from the peaceful hush of darkness, from night's "blue quietness above," there would come to him a thought, a ray of brilliance, a glimmer of inspiration. Fretfully he smoked in his rectory study—Father John and Father Tully had retired long before—and nervously his hand twitched at the dial of the radio until clearly spoken words, fraught with anxiety, rushed out from the invisible. He twisted his cigarette into ashes. He listened. At exactly five minutes past two, Sunday morning, there came over the wave lengths into his house, as he was slumped in an easy chair, a terrifying radio dispatch from the open, national hook-up, especially so preserved for last-minute news flashes of the Lindbergh baby kidnaping. The voice of the air announcer brought into the sanctified holiness of this late-hour listener's home, news that Colonel Lindbergh, in his frantic nervousness and sorrow, had appointed as his official go-between, Salvy Spitale and Irving Bitz, his first lieutenant—

two "right guys" of gangland, recognized habitués of New York's underworld, and the former "pals" of the slain Jack "Legs" Diamond and his "mob." The flier, out of desperation, engulfed by a hopeless quandary, encouraged by a bevy of brilliant minds acting as his advisers, had adopted this course of action as an expediency. He believed that gangsters—presuming gangsters had lifted the baby into the clouds—fearing to deal with him directly or with the forces of the law in bargaining for the safe return of his son, might "come through" for Spitale and Bitz under negotiations evolved from the grape-vine code of the underworld. It was the theory of the moment, the hope of the baby's return, the anticipated solution of the crime.

Father Coughlin was shaken from his unsettled mind and aroused from his personal concerns. He was stirred to the quick. Spitale and Bitz—dressed-up hoodlums, appointed as Lindbergh's mediators. Go-betweens of life and death. The nation's baby had been stolen and for his safe return, the minds of the nation were bowing to them with patronizing indulgence and friendly intercourse, with formal acknowledgement of their strength and abilities, with avowal of their prowess and with sanction of their methods. For many, many minutes the priest sat pensively, an inner indignation raging at the incongruity of such a parallel. He pounded the soft arm of the deep-maroon, mohair chair. The inspiration had come to him! He lit another cigarette and as its billowy haze of smoky, bluish-gray rose with melting, spreading thinness, his mind reconstructed the angles of the abduction. There was no condonation of a situation wherein the nation's idol was driven to

deal with hoodlums to regain his son. "Why, it is preposterous," he said aloud. Yet the ringing truths of his air predictions had come to pass. This was what prohibition had given birth to, he mused.

A hoarse voice from out of the darkness called to him:

"It is about time all good Christians were in bed and asleep."

Father Coughlin moved, stirred from his reverie, answered back his assent and retired. But though his bulky frame—with recent years he had gained much weight; he was now in the taunting, concerning neighborhood of 200 pounds — snuggled in the warmth of relaxation, the arms of Morpheus did not cover him with "sleep; sweet, gentle sleep" until far-off chimes, rending the muffled stillness of night, pealed four bells.

With no written words, with no notes, with only a briefly worded editorial from the Detroit *Free Press*, but with a rush of sincerity that poured forth volubly from an awakening, quickening, and creative impulse, Father Coughlin stepped before the microphone in the sanctuary of the Shrine of the Little Flower that afternoon. What courage it demanded to meet the fixed dials of judging, waiting millions with but scanty preparation—with practically no preparation! But his heart was full, and when the heart is full, eyes well with tears and there is speech. Under a ruffled brow of care, his face was flushed. His eyes were half-closed with languid heaviness from lack of sleep and from wrestling in the throes of constant thought and introspect. Exotic incense burned on the altar. And from Father Coughlin's full, firm mouth, smoothly and rapidly there came

shapen into words and phrases a spoken drama of stark simplicity that struck passionately into the hearts of his listeners, struck responsively into their lives, struck emotionally into their souls.

The Shepherd of the Air was truly a Shepherd, denouncing, pleading, portraying, intoning the wrath of a merciful God for those who had side-stepped His path:

"Repent, ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

He was speaking in an inspired hope to awaken the dormant consciousness of rotting hearts and rotting minds, to call to judgement bloodsucking vampires of an allegedly civilized generation. The "voice of the wilderness" was crying out to the wilderness of a lost soul.

"As I sat listening to the radio dispatches, my sense of security was shocked by the most outrageous committal ever seen by the American public. . . . Do you know who these men are? They are unlawful. They are racketeers. They are the new Almighty that we have in the United States. In all the history of civilization there was never such an admission made by any country. And that is what prohibition has brought us."

And, as the "voice of the wilderness" called out to "make straight the paths of God," a drumming rain beyond the portals of his church intoned a monotonous obligato for his litany. Outside, it was a dark and dismal, bleak Sunday afternoon. The torrential downpour drummed spatterings against the window panes and splashed furiously in the muddy pools. It was dark and gloomy, an abysmal escort of despair to despond. It was cheerless, damp, miserable. And the "voice of the wilderness" from

"HIS GOLDEN VOICE IN STIRRING SPEECH"

out of that clay-cold dampness, from out of that shivering wetness, came into the homes of the country's millions to capture human hearts anew. And millions, unashamedly—proudly, you might say—let fall the teardrops of their sobbings with his pleadings; murmured "Amen" to his biting arraignment of conditions which permitted such a heinous crime to be carried out; hailed him anew as the modern apostle of religious drama and of human appeal.

Then, from the depths of his soul, he spoke:

"These words, my friends, are not addressed to all of you. They are addressed, I hope, to those who know something about the kidnaping of Charles Lindbergh, Jr. In one way, Mr. Kidnaper, I feel sorry for you. You have committed a crime, and like every other crime, it was no sooner committed than your heart repented—repented, perhaps, for some material personal reason, because you know that certainly the wages of sin is death. . . . Or if you prefer not to take the child to an orphanage, there is some Catholic rectory or priest house—and I might interpose and tell you that you can impose upon that priest a priestly seal of confidence that he dare not break. Make him your debtor! For God's sake think it over. Just for a moment remember when you were a little boy. For a moment remember a woman whose breast suckled you and whose arms encircled you, a woman—your mother—who went down into the valley that you might have life. Oh, she loved you more than she loved the entire world and she would have given her life for you, not only at your birth but if it were possible for her to come back from the other world she would lay down her life for you in this moment to relieve you of the

mental anguish through which you have passed. . . . There is another mother, too—Anne Lindbergh! Do you realize that you are holding away from her arms flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood? That you are not injuring the baby heart so much as you are crushing and breaking her heart, as if in a great press, making her bleed the wine of sorrow? My God, if you have any manliness, if you have the least spark of your own childhood, or for your own mother left in your heart, bring the baby to some orphanage, to some priest's house. Oh! If I could only do it, I would be glad to go there and take the child from your arms. . . . You might call it sentiment, but my dear, misguided friend, there is such a thing as sentiment in this world, for religion, for God, who made you. There is nothing half so holy in this world as the mother who bore you, and if you wish to call it sentiment by playing upon the heart strings of mother love, call it such. But, it is still real. . . . I would like to tell you that this sacred, little babe you are handling with your dirty hands—I would like to tell you that one time you, too, were just as he. One time you, too, were curly headed. Little soft hands, so lonely; heart so pure; soul pure as the driven snow. And you put off the things of a boy, and you have grown to manhood, and you have left behind that corpse of your purity. . . . Like another Judas, you have taken and crucified Him and this woman. . . . don't you believe in immortality? . . . Have you lost faith in the potency of a bullet? Don't you know there is such a thing as death and judgement and hell? . . ."

The next day Father Coughlin became the revered hero of the hour. Men had clenched their fists;

women had wailed as the "voice of the wilderness" chanted his lamentation for the bereft young Lindbergh couple and a nation's tragedy.

In the street, in the office, in the factory, in the home, an excited and emotionally aroused populace voiced comments, that substantially were these:

"Wonderful Father Coughlin . . . gripping appeal . . . unrestrained tears . . . beautiful . . . spiritual . . . holy . . . such pleading . . . such an open heart . . . brilliant man . . . human heart . . . a man with a soul as well as with a keen mind . . . a student of human nature . . . gorgeous drama . . . human to his finger tips. . . ."

Mothers and fathers, school boys and school girls, collegiates and non-collegiates, shop girls and factory help, store executives and business leaders, the high and the low, the soft and the calloused, the intelligentsia and the uneducated, the believing and the atheistic—all reviewed the priest's sermon of the previous day. It was a glorious declamation, a brilliant bubbling over of his inner self, an extemporaneous dissertation that was praised and acclaimed the length and breadth of the land, an emotional awakening that drew oceans of tears, flattering hero-worship and eulogistic benediction. Father Coughlin's ability for reaching into the hearts of mankind was, once and for all time, indelibly stamped for recording in a nation's hall of fame.

Friends—his severest critics—came to him during the week and openly exalted him. Thousands upon thousands of letters added words of unshakeable faith in him. And a nation, stirred from its roots, spoke up, one for all, and all for one:

"Father, that was the greatest sermon you have

ever preached. You are a genius with words, a genius with the drama of effect, a genius with knowledge of life's interlacings, a genius with appeal."

Then, and only then, was it discovered that he had stepped before the metal disc totally unprepared; that his appeal to the Lindbergh kidnapers was the natural plea of his burning emotions, of his touched, full, and aching heart. But the words, so beautiful, so strong, so vital—where—how did he find them so readily, so unfalteringly, they asked.

The priest looked into space. His full, esthetic, manly face was turned upwards to the heavens. Softly, slowly, he spoke:

"In illa hora dabitur vobis quid diceris—In that hour, it shall be given unto you what to say."

* * * *

Following this sermon, the supreme highlight of his radio career, there rushed to Royal Oak a corps of newspaper writers, assigned by their respective papers to pen the descriptions of the "man nobody has seen," "the man very few really know," "the man who by the power of his eloquence is controlling the destinies of the cities."

The first newspaper executive in the country to appreciate the potential circulation value of Father Coughlin as a newspaper feature, the first to give his readers a close-up, human interest view of the "priest as a man"—though it was a fragmentary sketch—was James P. Murphy, managing editor of the *Boston Daily Record* and the *Boston Sunday Advertiser.* For quite some time, Mr. Murphy had his eyes on the circulation possibilities of this astounding radio lecturer. For months back he en-

tertained the idea. A Catholic, himself, he was naturally drawn to the priest. But aside from the religious angle, Mr. Murphy appreciated the professional intensity of Father Coughlin as a build-up for the circulation of his Sunday paper. Six weeks before the Lindbergh sermon, the managing editor had written a full-page Sunday feature on the priest, but the promotions of other newspaper build-ups necessarily tabled the Father Coughlin story until a later and more propitious edition. Newspaper circulation is, after all, a study in the psychology of reading matter for a reading public. John W. Kenney, present circulation manager of the *Chicago Herald-Examiner* (formerly with the *Record* and *Sunday Advertiser* in the same capacity; before that, circulation manager for the *Detroit Times*), was familiar with the priest's popularity in the automobile city. In his home town, Father Coughlin was treated strictly as "spot news" material. Urged by John Fahey, a member of his Boston circulation department, Mr. Kenney broke the date of the "proper spot" to Mr. Murphy and together they proceeded to "sell" Father Coughlin to a New England reading public.

Before Mr. Murphy left for a vacation, he arranged with Mr. Kenney to promote the story hard. They talked it out in the managing editor's bare, cubby-hole of an office—moving picture lay-outs of palatial sanctums for the comfort of temperamental editors, to the contrary. And over a hard, flat desk they laid out the material. The managing editor and circulation manager had prepared truck placards, bill posters featuring the photograph of the priest, daily newspaper advertising in other journals, radio

advertising—all of which announced the first, intimate study of the crusading pastor, the militant priest, the radio Shepherd. The day before Father Coughlin completely captivated the entire nation by his appeal to the kidnapers, a proof of the full-page story, scheduled to run the next day in the *Sunday Advertiser*, was approved and "sent through" to the composing room. And that Sunday, even before Father Coughlin stormed the imagination and magnetized many more millions of listeners, the *Sunday Advertiser*, throughout the New England states where it was circulated, jumped in circulation close to fifty thousand copies. Close to *fifty thousand* increase in one day! And after ten o'clock that Sunday morning, a paper couldn't be purchased from the newsboys in the street or from the designated news dealers. It was only a fragmentary sketch and the public "ate it up." From the standpoint of news and news value, Father Coughlin was the greatest circulation booster the Sunday paper had ever had for a "one-day stunt." Such was the pull and drawing power of the radio man of the cloth!

The day after the "greatest sermon," writers, especially from New England, flocked to Royal Oak, while the Hearst papers "picked up," in the interim, the *Sunday Advertiser's* story. Word had spread of the drawing power of the priest and editors bellowed for quick copy on Father Coughlin. That week, Jack Malloy, executive city editor of the *Boston Evening American* and one of the shrewdest newspaper minds in the country, assigned me to Royal Oak for a series of interviews with Father Coughlin that would be called his "Talks to Women." It was to be a departure from his routine broadcasts and a

FATHER COUGHLIN, MISS MUGGLEBEE AND "PAL"

series devoted to his thoughts on love and marriage, divorce and the home, politics and careers for women, the younger generation and the significance of the sweeping irreverence of religion.

The horrors of the elements welcomed me to Royal Oak that wet, slushy, March morning; elements that continued their drab, New England-like, Winter welcome for several days to chill my bones and divorce me, in feeling, from the town. After three days of intensive plugging and repeated telephone calls, I at last succeeded in reaching Father Coughlin, though it wasn't my pictured meeting of dignity and grace. I might never have reached him at all, had the girl at the switchboard had her way. A pretty miss, she had an ingrown dislike and fear for newspaper scribes, particularly women writers. And her adeptness is something to write about.

Fortunately, Father Coughlin's Great Dane, Pal, nearly bowled me over when I almost slipped on the icy esplanade of the Tower after hopelessly and angrily trying to push open, or even ajar, a locked bronze door of immovable tonnage. The dog bolted from around a corner and your correspondent was all but thrown into Father Coughlin's arms. All out of breath, but spying the clerical collar of the priesthood, I squeaked — though my natural voice is contralto—:

"You're Father Coughlin—"

And hurriedly I tried to regain my composure and look saintly.

"Yes," said he, repressing a smile.

And there before me, who was standing in the slush of that white March Monday morning—I was without overshoes, my feet sopping wet—stood a

handsome man, little more than forty, of stout, robust build, bespectacled, smartly-dressed, and perfectly groomed—the glorious, famed, Father Coughlin of the radio.

He looked down at my dripping, thin-soled footwear (Vanity, thy name is Woman!) and with an accusing but soft eye of reprimand, spoke—his voice a rhythmical trill of cultured moderation.

"Would you like to come in out of the snow and warm yourself?"

The man who was so difficult to reach, was the most accessible in the world to chat with. He escorted me into the basement of the Tower where hundreds of girls, with flying, expert fingers, were filing, typing, checking, and marking—all of which looked like "big business" to me. Before we sat down to our business, that of interviews and of having ourselves photographed together (at Malloy's wise suggestion—to authenticate the startling stories), adoring young women repeatedly approached the priest with Father this and Father that. They beamed as they addressed him and in their eyes was the heritage of centuries—faith. Finally he turned to me. He swept his hand—and, oh, what a finely-shaped, artistic hand it is, with the strength of his character and the gentility of his soul written into its flesh—over the family of workers.

"I have 106 young women working here. I pay them very well. . . . They handle the routine of the Shrine business. . . . The Detroit post office has assigned the entire second floor of their building to me and other workers are there. . . . I have my own printing office where reprints of my Sunday sermons are made. . . . Upstairs my four private secretaries

carry on. . . . By the end of the season, more than two million pieces of literature will be sent out on requests from listeners. . . . And it is all due to the radio."

*Two million* pieces of literature in a season. Think of it! It could make one dizzy, figuring out the millions who listened to him. Suffice it to estimate the number at a conservative figure of around eighty million tuners-in!

We climbed a short flight of stairs, the priest and I, and soon I found myself in the lobby of the Tower, an indirectly illuminated lobby of modernistic design, colored in pastel shades accentuating the delicacy and flower-like simplicity of the Saint in whose honor the Shrine was erected. The walls are patterned in step-like fashion. And overhead the pastel shadings of the ceiling give promise of momentary showers of flowers. Long cylinders of glass stretch across at designated intervals to send down a soft, subdued, soul-warming light. The lobby of a church that will be utterly different, a lobby that is modernistic in keeping with the times which helped to build it. To the left of the entrance is an altar, hung with heavy drapes of gorgeous blue. In front, there are gates of grilled, wrought iron, and above the gates are the words of Saint Therese—the prophesied words of hallow saintliness:

"I will let fall a shower of roses."

Four pre-dieux are not far distant from the gates, where fervent and devout pilgrims may kneel and pray to the Carmelite nun in Father Coughlin's Charity Crucifixion Tower. And some day—some day in that dream future of his, Father Coughlin will

pay tribute to the sweet memory of his little sister, Agnes; the sister he always wanted but never could have; the sister who died in infancy to leave him the only child of "that pleasant young Irish couple." Some day in that radio church of octagonal architecture where there will be the Stations of the Cross, where there will be fourteen grottos, will stand an altar—St. Agnes Altar—for Father Coughlin's baby sister.

I had seen the beautiful and exquisite Charity Tower that radio had built. I had seen the interior of its modernistic lobby. I had viewed with artistic joy the semi-modern, semi-classical marble behind the grilled gates, representing in pure whiteness of stone Jesus on His mother's lap, giving a rose to the Little Flower—a solid piece of Carrara marble weighing six tons, sculptured by hand tools. It portrayed the saint as the intermediary acting as a messenger for the Almighty God. It was ecstatic artistry of sheer beauty, after the Michelangelo school. There was no doubt but that Father Coughlin was a profound appraiser of sublime symmetry, an exponent of dazzling elegance, a favorite of religious magnificence.

The priest and I climbed more spiral staircases, groping our way in the semi-darkness in ascent to the upper floors of the Tower. Ahead of us raced the Great Dane, his cumbersome figure and ponderous weight no deterrent to speed.

"In here," Father Coughlin called cheerily when I stopped for breath on the third landing. And so we entered a tiny office. A bobbed-haired, attractive, young woman was busily working. But at Father Coughlin's suggestion, she quickly and pleasantly moved her work. Father Coughlin and I sat down

to chat and to look through the scrolled crevices of the Tower windows.

He smiled at first when I placed my feminine queries before him, queries pertinent to the life and happiness of women.

"Yes, Father, but what about the country's women?" I persisted. "What part is theirs to play in a ruling country that whitewashes its own hypocrisies of beliefs and actions? Are the women losing out? Is their emancipation a curse instead of a blessing? Can women continue to cabaret through life with a song, a dance, and a drink? . . ."

Again he smiled infectiously as he volunteered:

"You must remember that I have only studied women impersonally."

And then he struck a serious pose. He waited for a moment. Then he became the thinker, the profound scholar, as he knitted his high forehead and gave voice to his views. He talked and smoked, smoked and talked.

He talked of marriage that is tottering as an institution; divorce that is ruining marriage and sweeping the country; woman who has no place in politics; woman who needs no career, who, primarily, belongs in the home; the younger generation which is dissipating her motherhood of to-morrow; and the irreligious wave that has taken its toll of the family and robbed the country of genuine family life.

"Woman is man's inspiration. She always was and always will be." It was the voice of the priest. "She must be. Women can do more to conquer the beast in man with beauty than with brains. And I

don't mean drug store beauty. I mean that beauty that comes from within. Women can do more with the gentleness of their voice, than ten thousand armies with swords. We want women to have an education but we don't want them to be engineers or pilots or other such fanciful things. The Blessed Virgin was no preacher of sermons. But she was an apostle of goodness. Woman has no place on man's level. She belongs above it. Women have finer passions, finer appreciation of beauty, finer depths of love. . . ."

He talked and I listened humbly to the country's most daring apostle of truth, to a man of broad shoulders and broad mentality, to a man of scholarly intellect and death-defying convictions, to a man of deep humility, of captivating charm, of winning sincerity, of seething, burning, boiling emotions for the right, of bitter, snarling contempt for the wrong—to a MAN, pre-eminently human.

* * * *

He probed humanity to its lowest depths. He alone sensed that the peace of the still air was fraught with disaster. He alone lifted his voice, "the voice of the wilderness," the wilderness of adversity, the adversity of inspiration, the inspiration of the modern and instrumental radio. And through it all ran the placid consciousness of a dominant man. But behind it all towered the silent and compliant figure of a sympathetic and inspiring, friendly and approving Right Reverend, the Bishop Michael James Gallagher, of Detroit. And over all shone

down the queenly blessing of Fate, to guide the destinies of man.

What of the final curtain?

> "I've left the past in God's keeping,—
> The future His mercy shall clear."