

*No Gestures of Resentment.* There must be among them no sign of anger, resentment, envy or contentiousness, either in bearing or act: not a word, a glance of the eye, an expression of countenance, or anything else apt to provoke a companion to anger. And if anyone falls into any of these things, the fact that he was in some way first aggrieved is no sufficient excuse for the fault of which he is guilty. For a wrong, on whatever occasion committed, is equally a wrong.

*No Oaths.* Every oath must be banished from the monastic Community: but a nod of the head, or a sound of assent, shall be held as good as an oath, whether one is speaking or listening. But if anyone will not credit a bare assertion, he shows evidence of being guiltily aware that he himself is failing to speak the truth; and so the Superior must reckon him as a delinquent, and inflict wholesome punishment.

*Nightly Self-examination.* At the close of day, when every task, bodily and spiritual, is ended, each one, before going to rest, should make a heart-felt examination of his own conscience. And if there is anything amiss, whether a thought of forbidden things, or an improper speech, or sloth in prayer, or carelessness in the psalmody, or desire for the world, he must not hide his fault, but confess it to the Community: that such mischief having befallen him, his hurt may, by the prayers of all, be healed.

*(The second Discourse will appear in the September issue.)*



## CORRESPONDENCE

### LIFE OF THE CURE D'ARS

To the Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

Sir,—There might have been some justification in Father Branney's strictures if I had been reviewing the first edition of Trochu's *Life of the Curé d'Ars*. I was, however, reviewing a book 'now in its ninth edition and of which 80,000 copies of the French text have already been sold'. To underline my point, I was reviewing a book which has established itself as a *de facto* popular life: for Father Branney to say that Trochu had no intention of writing a popular life is therefore to miss completely the point of my review.

Continuing my review of the book (and not of the author) I said that its style, 'useful for research students', was not 'best suited to a popular life'. My assailant dashes to my rescue: he points out that the book was written 'for a Doctorate's thesis' and that 'spiritual edification and theological criticism or appreciation are

not in the author's purview'. His initial error has prevented Father Branney from following any of my argument. . . .

A lot is made of my remark that the *Life* gives 'quite a fantastic picture of the saint', but supposing Father Branney were to write my life and chronicle all my virtues and penances, the details might well be correct, but the final picture would be fantastic if it did not mention that there were a few other priests in England today with a virtue or two and a little penance in their lives. That is what I meant of this *Life*. Was Ars the moral cess-pool of France, leaving the 'boîtes de nuit' in Paris rather tame by comparison: were there any other priests in France who inveighed against dancing or was the Curé the only one: did other priests refuse dancers absolution, and if so why was it extraordinary that the Curé did; and if not, was he right: was the Curé the only good priest in France or only the best among many good priests? 'Research students' might not lose their sense of proportion but the ordinary reader probably would and receive a 'quite fantastic impression' without any of the details given by the author being wrong.

Then the big thing. Father Branney asserts that among us, pastoral clergy, 'the desire' of imitating the Curé d'Ars 'and not the capability is usually lacking'. That is a harsh thing to say of a fine body of men, and because I mildly said that we all had the desire but that if our ideal were painted in too glowing terms we might doubt our capability, you are accused of doing a disservice to the spiritual life in this country by publishing my review. But Pius XI exhorts us to imitate the Curé only 'as much as possible'. Do you think Father Branney ought to teach a Pope, as he would teach me, the doctrine of grace? Surely a Pope ought to know that with grace we can do all things and that therefore no matter how high we set our ideal we can attain it, and that therefore we can all imitate the Curé completely and not merely 'as much as possible', or do you think His Holiness had in mind, as I certainly had, that we might not co-operate with the grace that is given us?

And that bewildering peroration: did not I, too, say that the purpose of the Curé's canonisation was 'to stimulate every priest engaged on the pastoral ministry': did the Pope include 'The Life of the Curé d'Ars by Francis Trochu' in the Bull of canonisation of Jean Marie Vianney: and what have the feelings of the French clergy towards the Curé to do with my opinion of Trochu's book? —I remain, etc.,

TERENCE TANNER.

To the Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

Sir, — I have followed with increasing interest the articles and correspondence which have appeared from time to time in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT regarding the solitary and contemplative vocation for those living in 'the world'.