

THE EDUCATOR

It is likely that the Society lost its best teacher when Mother Barat was made Superior at the age of twenty-three. She had been well-prepared; at Joigny her mother and brother between them had given her 'the book-knowledge of a boy and the home-training of a girl.' Yet this future educator never went to school, and used to say: "The trouble with me is that I never was a child of the Sacred Heart." Instead of listening to a teacher expounding literature she read it; she went to primary sources and savored them. This method suited her mind; it favored penetration, direct outlook, and depth of thought. Remembering what classical studies had done for her in her lonely attic, she said:

We must know how to inspire in our pupils a passion for the beautiful. Let us put history into their souls; without that, memories will fade and we shall have wasted our time. In seeing the empires that rise and fall one after the other, they will perhaps learn to rise above their own troubles. They will thus better understand the sic transit gloria mundi, and their hearts, disillusioned with what is nothing, will be more strongly drawn to Him who alone remains in the midst of so many ruins.

To make sure that these ends were being pursued, Mother Barat kept in personal contact with the work of the school. When she wanted to see how the studies were coming on, she would bring her workbasket with her and visit a class. I can still see her, knitting and listening to each child with humble and loving attention, just as if the recitation of the Punic Wars interested her to the point of excitement. What really interested her and gave her that palpable flame was her love of our fourth vow of the education of youth in its reality and actual detail. Her strong faith gave life and value to everything. If some child showed that her intelligence had passed beyond mere memorizing and had begun to reason for itself as she answered a question, our Mother herself became animated, and she would draw out the child with questions that overcame her timidity. It was delightful to watch and we could follow on our Mother's face the opinion that she had formed not only of each child but of the way in which the class as a whole was taught. In the higher classes, and in each branch of study, she would check on the intellectual grasp on the pupil as well as on that of the teacher.

She would stop her knitting sometimes to take notes on the line that the studies should take at the moment and, as a true foundress, on the progress that they should make in the future. Whenever she spoke of the classes, one could see at once her own great capacity for dealing with the subject, and her own cultivation in the arts and sciences of her day. 'My brother got me tangled up in grammar, history, geography, since I would have to spend my life among learned people, or those who want to be.'

Sometimes she would say: "I am going to teach a doctrine class today. "She would go to the little ones and get them to say "Our Father who art in heaven? 'There we are,' I said Mother Barat. "Is God all alone in heaven? Who will tell me? Now each one will tell me what her idea of heaven is.

What have you got in your head? Come on; think this out. Shut your eyes. Think!

On July 20. 1852. Mother Barat wrote a letter to all the Children of the Sacred Heart in both hemispheres:

I am always so laden with work and business at the time of my feast that usually I have to ask you Mothers to be my spokesmen and tell you of my feelings; they know my affection for you. they know with what consolation I learn from them of your fidelity to duty. your progress along every line.

but especially in piety. However. it would cost me too much not to tell you this year how much I have been touched by your good wishes. by your readiness to respond to the love of the Divine Heart of Jesus and to show that you are His children.

Now it was not without a special design of His mercy that this title of Children of the Sacred Heart that burns with zeal and charity has been given to you in this time when selfishness reigns everywhere and makes such sad ravages. This title reveals to you the important mission that is yours. It is for you. dear children. to continue. I might even say to complete. our own mission by devoting yourself to the love of Jesus and to the salvation of those who do not know Him. Your example. even more than your words. will be an eloquent lesson to the world; but for that you must make yourselves ready in advance by profiting by the innumerable graces that Jesus pours out on

you. It is this generous disposition that I ask as a bouquet for my feast. and since I cannot as you would like to have me do. bless you at first hand and speak to you face to face of my fears and hopes. ah! at least I beg the Divine Savior. and Mary. your tender Mother. to bless you. not to allow a single one of you to be unfaithful to her dear title. or be missing on that day that will unite mothers and children in the common center of their love.

These. my dear children. are the wishes for you of a Mother who is very tenderly devoted to you in the Divine Heart.

Barat. Superior General of the Society of the Sacred Heart.