

## LEGENDS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

### The Huguenots

*Mater Inviolata— Mother Inviolata*

The histories recording the crimes of those, who, during the religious troubles which afflicted the Church in the sixteenth century, desecrated and demolished the sacred edifices, holy images, and venerated shrines, also furnish proofs of their punishment. Sometimes hath Divine Justice seemed slow in inflicting the blow, but often it has fallen on the miscreants at the moment of their iniquity. How unsearchable are the ways of Divine Providence! Many creditable facts are recorded concerning the venerated images of our Blessed Lady. In the country where the sparrow chirped her sweet name (whose legend you have read in this book), there was an image of the Blessed Virgin, the size of life, known by the name, dear to so many Christians, of our Lady of Help. A man impiously boasted, in 1794, that "he would bring her down from her niche." Such was his gross expression. The church was opened, and he entered with his implements of destruction. Depositing his basket at the corner of the altar, he mounted on it to examine the figure. He found it was firmly attached to the wall by a strong iron bar, and that it would require a heavy Instrument to displace it. He turned to descend, when he slipped and fell from the altar. Wonderful to relate, the image, which was so firmly fixed, instantly detached itself, and falling on the man killed him, without suffering the least injury itself.

In the same year, two men rushed into St. Paul's Church, at Orleans. Their object was to destroy a long-venerated image, representing the Blessed Virgin holding her Divine Son in her arms. One broke his leg on falling from an altar; the other fixed his ladder, mounted it, and placed his hands upon the image. No sooner had he touched it, than he was seen to tremble, and, to the astonishment of the lookers-on, quietly descended, and feeling his way cautiously, to the amazement of the whole City, he left the church stone blind.

Instances of the like nature abound in every locality, and an authentic collection of them would form striking examples of divine justice. In the following legend, the profanation was simply prevented, without being followed by an immediate punishment. We must transport ourselves to the department of the Landes, near Bordeaux, the country of St. Vincent of Paul. Three celebrated pilgrimages exist there within the circuit of a league; the cottage wherein Vincent was born in the village of Poy; the great oak in which, when a child, he retired to pray; and the renowned chapel of our Lady of Buglose, where, according to the local traditions, he sang his first mass.\*\*

This chapel, and the homage shown to our Blessed Lady on this spot, are of very early origin. Every document which could illustrate this subject, disappeared on the traces of the Huguenots, in 1570, when, by the order of Jane d'Albret, they laid waste this country, burning and destroying all that was dear to Catholic hearts.

At the first report of their approach, some of the faithful, wishing at least to preserve the beloved image of our Lady, a beautiful marble statue, took it secretly from the chapel and concealed it within the briars of a marsh, not fearing that the armed bands would venture there in search of it. The image was thus saved from heretical violence. But thirty years elapsed before the country returned to perfect security; the Huguenots domineered over the inhabitants, and the men who had concealed the image died at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and their secret was buried with them. The old men who had repaired the sanctuary of their dear

*\*\*Péleriage de St. Vincent de Paul et de Notre Dame de Bugloge, par M. Dunos CbapelLiu, 1844*

Lady remembered with regret her sweet image, which had smiled down upon them in their childhood, but sought in vain for any trace of it, and gave up the search in despair.

Time went on, the hydra of heresy was nearly extirpated by the efforts of Louis XIII; meanwhile the marsh dried up. A young shepherd of the parish of Foy, in the year 1620, being accustomed to drive his herds to pasture on the land surrounding the marsh, remarked one day that one of his oxen had wandered into the marsh, and half-buried in the briars, stopped at a certain spot, and began bellowing most violently. This being repeated two or three times, the shepherd thought there must be something extraordinary in it, and felt at first much afraid. Being, however, curious to discover the cause of this strange occurrence, he mounted a tree and discovered the bull licking a human form which lay buried in the briars. His fear increasing at this sight, he descended more quickly than he got up, and ran at his best speed to alarm the neighborhood with the startling intelligence. The chief of the inhabitants, headed by the Rector of Poy, hastened to the spot, and making a way through the shrubs, found, to their great surprise, a marble image of the Blessed Virgin, beautiful and perfect, half-buried in the swamp.

There still remained one old couple, who, with tears of joy, recognized their much-regretted image of our Lady formerly placed in her chapel. Great demonstrations of joy were shown; fervent prayers and devout canticles burst from every mouth. The recovered image, which had lain hidden for half a century, was reverently taken up. It was placed on a temporary pedestal covered with verdure, and under a canopy of flowers. It remained there a twelvemonth, and many were the favors which Mary lavished on her devoted children during that period. So renowned did the image become, that the Bishop of Dax went to visit it in solemn procession. Among other wonders, a stream sprung up at its foot, and it still continues to flow at the present day.

This prelate, believing he discovered the hand of God in the graces which had flowed from prayers addressed to our Blessed Lady before this image, ordered it to be carried with great ceremony to the parish church of Poy. Everything being prepared for this translation, and the people collected together from neighboring parts, the procession began to move. But when the statue had reached the remains of the ancient chapel, the beasts who drew it stood still, and could not be induced by any means to proceed further. This was considered an evident sign of our Lady's pleasure to reinstate her holy image in its ancient sanctuary. Accordingly, it was erected in the chapel, which was immediately rebuilt with such zeal, that it was ready to be opened on Whit-Monday, in the year 1622. The circumstances of the recovery of the image were painted on the walls, and in allusion to the animal who discovered it, it was henceforth called our Lady of Buglose.\*\*

The pilgrimage became much frequented, and in 1706, Bernard d'Abadie, Bishop of Dax, increased its celebrity by giving the chapel to the Lazarists, or Fathers of the Mission, founded by St. Vincent of Paul.

Surprising cures, wonderful conversions, and numberless graces were obtained at this venerated sanctuary of the Blessed Mother of God. At length the revolution came, in 1789. Its progress was rapid. Like the impetuous rush of whirlwinds and torrents, so is the unrestrained burst of human passions. But amidst the general plunder and destruction of the churches around, the chapel of our Lady of Buglose remained untouched, owing, not indeed to the forbearance of the mob, but the supernatural interference of providence.

*\*\*Buglose, in the local patois, signifies the bellowing of oxen. I cannot discover what name the pilgrimage bore before the time of its destruction by the Protestants.*

A crowd of impious men invaded our Lady's sanctuary, armed with axes, hammers, and other destructive weapons. Ladders were planted against the walls to assist the work of destruction. While the most horrid blasphemies were uttered, some mounted the ladders, and others began to dismantle the altar and other objects within their reach. But on a sudden every hand was arrested, every tongue was silenced, and every heart trembled, while a deep and awful sound seemed to issue from beneath the chapel. It increased with such vehemence that, unable to comprehend its cause, and terrified with the fear of being swallowed up alive the sacrilegious wretches fled in confusion, leaving everything behind them.

This circumstance was known to all the country, and excited such a dread, that no one ever afterwards dared even to think of pillaging our Lady's Chapel. Thus were pilgrims still able to visit their beloved shrine, undismayed by fear of the impious. The authorities of the place passed one not of the most absurd decrees of that epoch. They tolerated the opening of the chapel of Buglose, and placed under their protection the offerings of pilgrims to our Lady's shrine. Four or five years afterwards, religion was again proclaimed in the land, and this sanctuary was once more the universal refuge of the distressed and afflicted. With regard to the impious crew who attacked the chapel, we have not been able to obtain any satisfactory information; but to judge from a host of examples, their end must have been most wretched.

*\*\*For other instances of the fate of sacrilege, see the Tale of the Beggars," in the Legends of the Commandments of God page 17*