

WHITEFRIARS  
FAVERSHAM  
KENT

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# Carmelite News

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## THE MOUSE OF SAN MARTINO

**I** was nineteen before I started to learn Latin. I had a bad memory and it was a terrible task. Eventually I matriculated to the National University of Dublin and after a few years my Superiors decided that our class was very poor material, and that higher education was a waste of money. At that time there was a line of Superiors in the Province who were right out of the top drawer in academic qualifications. They looked upon our generation as being just the run of the mill. Life has since taught them some lessons, but many of them died without repenting their errors. They yanked us out of the University and drafted us into what they proudly called the Collegio de San Martino ai Monti, in Rome. We were a new growth in that place. Mushrooms in an old shed.

San Martino was an old Carmelite convent belonging to the Roman Province, mostly unused, and we settled down under a Maltese Superior, a delightful old boy. Strict, but kindly, and he liked the Irish. We learned as time went on that his occasional explosions of temperament were just a national characteristic. We were only a dozen or so, and of no importance whatsoever.

A great big sala or room, framed with pictures of old Carmelite Saints, all numbered, because they were, as was the convent, the property of the Italian Government. That august body had confiscated all religious property on the formation of United Italy. Those who know Italy may recall that a United Italy is a fantasy of nationalistic imagination. However, that is only a part of the story. Even the

chairs and settees around the walls belonged to the Government, as did indeed the very tiles upon which we walked. There was a small kitchen, a make shift oratory, a few single rooms for the Prior and the senior students. The rest of us were bedded down in a large room divided by curtains into cubicles. The cubicles were roomy, I admit. There was a very large window at one end and a very small top window at the other. There was plenty of light and of course the climate was hot enough for Africans. Each of us had our cubicle and that was the only privacy we had. There was a small bedside table and a few hooks on which to hang our habits. Beds were old iron bedsteads boarded with wood on which lay a straw mattress. There was no intention of turning us into guardsmen but those beds certainly did give us straight backs, and very often a certain soreness where soreness is not appreciated amongst students who must sit for the waking hours of the day on hard benches and unyielding choir stalls. It was a hard life but we were young and prepared for anything. I still look back and wonder how on earth we endured it.

Looking down into the garden of San Martino the big crickets used to rub their legs all day in the trees creating the cricket noise. We didn't like them very much, because they were the same colour as the leaves and one is not interested in what one cannot see. On our beds in the cubicles we had sheets and a blanket and a bolster as hard as wood. I had the end cubicle. Sometimes as I lay there sweating out the Roman day, I noticed a hole in the corner of the

wainscoting and if you remained quiet, out used to come a little mouse. First his head and whiskers—and what magnificent whiskers they were. Beautiful! Surely three inches wide. There he used to sit half-way out of the hole looking at me. Then I began to leave a little of the mousetrap cheese on which we were fed and a crust of bread outside the hole. Sure enough he took it, and then I began to love mice. This graceful little chap used to raise the small chunk of cheese in his two pink paws and eat it up. Bread he didn't much care for, but eventually it used to disappear. In that end cubicle he and I were like St. Jerome and the lion. He did love cheese. Also, he had a sense of time. He knew exactly when the cheese should appear and evidently expected it. He was not afraid. He was just like a little man sitting on the fence.

**One day I forgot** the cheese, because instead of the yellow hard cheese the Prior decided to give us a nice cream cheese, so I ate the lot and there was nothing left for the mouse. I lay down on the hard bed for the siesta and went half asleep. Suddenly I awakened, and there was Mr. Mouse sitting on the bolster beside my head as much as to say, "What has happened to you? Where is my cheese?" There was nothing I could do about it except to promise him that next day he would have a double portion. We became very friendly. I loved his whiskers and his clean pink paws. He was a little gentleman. In the end I used to find him sitting on my bolster when I came home and he would not stir. Sometimes at night I used to feel him scrambling around the bed. He was becoming very friendly indeed. One evening as he sat on the little ledge I saw another whisker behind him. I thought, "Now you have got a wife." But that was not the end of it. In about ten days out came five little chaps just like father and mother and then cheese became quite a problem. I had to confide in the other students, but I found that there was a great divergence of opinion on mice. The whole difficulty was solved because eventually the student body of San Martino was moved to San Alberto and the Italian mice of San Martino were left to find another

patron.

**At San Martino** we were up about five in the morning. Then we had a half-hour's meditation in choir. At least that was the intention, but I am afraid that many of us went to sleep. Don't regard that as a lack of piety, it was just that we were students from the soft humid green Isle of Erin and the Roman heat sucked our very lives away. Not that anybody noticed it in the least. Roman Superiors are the most hard hearted category of men in the whole wide world.

**After meditation** we had morning Hours. After a quick breakfast of coffee and rolls with butter of a very suspicious character, we set out upon a four mile walk to the Collegio de San Alberto down on the verges of St. Peter's. There we spent the morning and afternoon before we returned home. They were trying to make us philosophers and theologians.

**I well remember** the morning's journey and equally well the return in the afternoon. We always went the same road. We got to know every inch of it. We knew the smell of every shop we passed. We began to know even the people who lived and worked in the streets. We were a class apart from them. They paid little attention to us, **but we noticed them.** How I remember those cobble stones! How I remember the steps we climbed down in the morning and climbed up in the afternoon. How I still remember the smells and the stinks of the Roman back streets.

**This is what we saw** in the morning. We climbed the cobbles of an ascending street and then down about thirty steps to drop into a by street before we came out on a main avenue. Tenement flats seven storeys high on each side mercifully shaded us from the morning sun. The stink of everything human, animal and vegetable. We passed under a canopy of washing hung out from the windows above. Some of those washing lines extended to about eight feet over the street. They had most ingenious ways of pulling out and pulling in the washing and of seeing that things didn't drop off. Every kind of male and female garment fluttered in the wind and became dry in the hot

Italian sun. Laundry was not a question of drying, it was just a question of washing. In those tenements hundreds of people lived; kindly and talkative. In them they were born, they lived and loved and died. They were not concerned with us, and we were not concerned with them.

**But there was Neddy.** Neddy was the scruffiest donkey you ever saw. He belonged to a charcoal burner. His job was to carry in panniers on each side of his back a load of wood to a backyard where his master burned it to make charcoal.

**You must remember** that Roman women did not use gas or electricity or coal to prepare meals, they used charcoal. There is no elaborate kitchen equipment. There is just a pan with a number of holes to give air when the charcoal is lit. Over the charcoal pans, meals, simple and elaborate, are prepared. Have you ever tasted a steak prepared over a charcoal fire? When it is just hot and frizzling they spread a mixture of Italian cheese and butter over it with a little salt and pepper. Never forget the chip potatoes. In France they call it Chateaubriant steak. It is served on a twelve inch plate. Dinner starts with a generous plate of macaroni or spaghetti dusted with cheese and then follows the steak and chips. When an Italian gets that under his belt he is at peace with his wife and therefore with the world for the next two days. This is to show just how important charcoal is, because there is nothing to replace charcoal in cooking. It is hot, yet it is slow and it gives that inimitable flavour to steak that no other method of cooking gives. I have often wondered what a revolution would come about in England, or Ireland, if wives could provide their husbands with food like that How happy men would be!

**But we must return to Neddy.** He had the longest ears of any ass I ever saw, but he wasn't interested in us. Why should he be? We were just about as interesting as a procession of ducks. Neddy had his rights in that street. He had established them by long and painful endeavour and he preserved them by the force of his two hind legs which could teach a

lesson to anyone who intruded on his territory.

**In that narrow street** of Roman tenements the ash can is the recipient of everything that is thrown away. Into it went ashes, broken plates, cabbage leaves and the residue of every kind of vegetable from the Roman markets. Lettuces, artichokes, onion tops, in fact the lot. Neddy had a way of teaching manners to people. In time the housewives learned that all residue of bread and vegetables should be placed nicely on top of the ash cans because if they were not Neddy would knock the ash cans over and spread the contents over the street. The resulting war with the dustmen was not a subject for poetry.

**Roman students** walk in crocodile two by two, like the animals going into Noah's ark. We used to go down through that noisy, roaring tunnel beneath the Quirinale Palace to the Piazza d'Espagna, past the statue of the Immaculate Conception, over the bridge of the Tiber to our academic day in the Collegio di San Alberto. Sweating in the hot Italian morning sun, footsore and tired, to commence a day that would have horrified any university student of modern days. Let no-one ever tell me that the life of a student in Rome is a picnic. It is more like Devil's Island.

**We started home** about five o'clock in the evening and we tried to avoid the crowded streets and go through the lanes. There was more shade. In the narrow lanes the broad minded ladies of the Roman scene congregated to catch the eye of passers by. We walked past them with eyes ahead like Her Majesty's Brigade of Guards, but we had to bear the barrage of comment that came forth from the four corners of the lanes. I cannot tell you what they used to say, I can only indicate it. We were a nomally good looking lot of young fellows in the twenties; tall, athletic and of course dedicated to the higher life. We carried our books under our arms or hung in a satchel from our shoulders. The general substance of their remarks was that we represented a terrible waste of **good human material**; that, in fact, we had fallen into

wrong hands. They had their likes and dislikes among us but there was one who excelled beyond all others in their preferment. A handsome young red head from County Tipperary. They couldn't understand why it was that such a handsome fellow could find himself marching in a crocodile of dedicated celibates. They didn't know that we understood Italian and of course they didn't understand English; but we had fun.

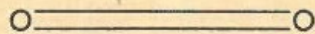
One day we met the Parish Priest of that district because our choir was invited to a function in his church. We told him about our experiences in the lanes. He told us that these women were the most generous donors to St. Anthony's Bread in the whole parish; that although they would not officially have anything to do with him their charity towards the poor was boundless. His comment was, "There is good in everybody." Much water has flowed under the

bridges of the Tiber in the forty years that divide us from then. Life has taught me also that there is much good in even the worst of us.

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Please support our appeal for the student funds.

The Carmelite Order in my time could not even afford to pay our bus fares to the nearby point of San Alberto. We travelled the four miles on foot to get there, and we travelled it back again. We were tired both ways. I look upon it to-day as ancient history, but I am also hoping for the day when the Order can pay normal bus fares for students who live miles from their centre of instruction and who arrive for a morning's heavy lecturing with burning feet and distracted minds. After all, we like walking, but either you have it in your feet or in your head, but it is seldom you have it both ways.



## THE PRISONER

**H**e used to stand at the top of the street beside the railway wall looking down the main street sloping down the town centre. I used to see him there many times in the week. People stand there sometimes to watch the out of town buses as they come up the main street, to catch sight of them before they arrive at the stop.

He puzzled me somewhat. The windows of our Club look out upon that corner and I used to look at him through the windows. A short stocky man, the ordinary artisan type, but somehow he always seemed to be there. Sometimes I would see him as I drove out of town and he would still be there two hours later when I came back. At first, I thought he was a workman just waiting for a bus, then I thought he was someone who was working queer hours and had to catch a late bus. Sometimes I thought he was a type with just nothing to do but to stand and watch. I said, "Good evening," to him a couple of times, but generally speaking I used to stop the car a little beyond his stand and

our paths didn't cross very much. There is a beautiful holly bush growing out of the side-walk beside the wall of the front garden of the Club. It is covered with berries in the winter and underneath that bush I pull up. I call my stand—"under the holly bush." If anyone wants to see me they can always look under the holly bush, and if my car is there, they know I am around.

He always seemed to be looking intensely at the street that sloped down to the bus station as if he was waiting for a bus, or expecting someone off the bus; but the hours and hours and hours he spent there puzzled me very much.

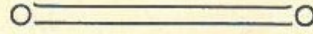
One day I asked a local man in the Club, "Who is that chap standing across the street at the corner?" Then I heard the story.

He was a married man whose wife had left him for another man of no good reputation. She was young and beautiful and she wanted more out of life than he could give her. So he was left stranded like a fish out of

water, waiting intensely, patiently, but with hope for a wife who would never return. She never will, I know it.

Some men are sentenced by law to penal servitude for life. Some men

even earn for themselves solitary confinement, but the power of the law is equalled only by the power of a woman. She, too, can sentence a man to imprisonment for life and solitary confinement, and hopelessness.



## ST. JUDE

Dear Rev. Father,

Recently my husband and I were on holiday in London, when a casual acquaintance, on hearing we were R.C., decided to tell us a most remarkable story. His wife had been very ill and doctors and specialists gave him no hope of her at all, in fact the time they allotted her was under three weeks. With three young children to care for you can imagine how desperate he was. One night on his way home from work he called in for a drink at the local, his desolate appearance caused the barmaid to stand and chat to him, and in no time he was telling her the whole story. Mary (the barmaid) said the next day was her day off, and she would go down to Faversham and there place a petition to Saint Jude on the Altar. There is quite a bit to this story Father I can't put into words. This man went on to say: While he doesn't disbelieve in God he never prays, hasn't been to Church since he was a child, but he pinned everything he had on this girls visit to Faversham, he waited all day for her return, impatiently he watched

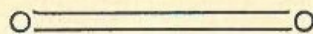
the clock, and waited. It was very late at night when she finally came and he was bitterly disappointed, she didn't look any different than she had the night before in the bar, though he couldn't give any reason why he expected her to look "heavenly".

The next morning he was summoned to the specialists room at the hospital. Fearing the worst, he went with a heavy heart, to learn to his utter amazement, (his wife had been down in the theatre that morning) the specialist said that whatever his wife had had she didn't have it now, she had a few days to get over the operation then he took her home to pick up the threads of life which he thought was almost over, and ever since she is known locally as the "Miracle Woman". I had a letter from our friend in London asking if I would write to you for a leaflet and one for another friend, both Non-Catholics.

Please remember me in your prayers.

Sincerely yours,

E.M.W.



**C**harity, as you know, is the rule of religious life. Without charity, without love, there is no piety, or dedication. The general rule is to teach Religious to see in all men the image of God. This is an essential outlook because it takes no care about whether a man is shaven or unshaven, scruffy or clean, well dressed or just in rags.

One particular Mistress of Novices was very fond of St. Joseph and she taught her novices to see in all men the image of St. Joseph. One of her novices answered the door and came back to her saying, "There is a poor

man at the door". The Mistress of Novices said, "Maybe it is St. Joseph!" The Novice said, "He smells strongly of drink". The Mother said, "Then, maybe it is St. Patrick!"

A maid was dusting the drawing room and knocked over an old Chinese porcelain bowl. In due course she told the mistress having previously gathered up the bits into a dustpan. The mistress burst into tears, "That vase," said she "was over three hundred years old and was priceless" "Thank God," said the maid "I thought it was new".

**THANKS**

Thanks to St. Jude for successful entrance Exam. J. Fava, Malta.

Grateful thanks to Our Lady and St. Jude for favour received.

Mrs. P.L., Clacton.

Thanks to St. Jude for favour received.

M. E. Maher.

Thanks to St. Anthony, St. Jude, Holy Souls for favour received.

G.M.S.

Thanks to St. Jude for favours received.

Mary Buckley.

Thanks to St. Jude for favours received.

J. A. Pearson.

Thanksgiving for remarkable answer to prayer.

R. M. H. Eltham.

Many thanks for favours received.

M. McLoughlin. Preston.

Thanks to the Sacred Heart, Our Lady and St. Jude for favour received.

Merthyr Tydfil.

Grateful thanks to The Divine Infant of Prague, Our Lady, St. Jude and Holy Souls.

Mrs. Quinn.

Grateful thanks to The Divine Infant Jesus of Prague and St. Jude.

Mrs. E. Roche, Co. Wexford.

Grateful thanks to St. Jude for favour received.

M. E. Maher.

Thanks to Father Titus Brandsma and Child Jesus of Prague for favour received.

Anon.

Thanks to Our Lady and Fr. Titus Brandsma for favour received.

C. Donovan, Cardiff.

Thanks to St. Jude, Little Flower and St. Anthony for favour received.

Brown.

**OUR COMING NOVENAS**

SAINT JUDE - - - - - Dec. 16th—Dec. 24th

THE DIVINE INFANT OF PRAGUE - - - Dec. 24th—Jan. 2nd

THE HOLY FAMILY - - - - - Dec. 31st—Jan. 7th

**OUR BURSES**

	<i>Already acknowledged</i>				<i>Increase</i>		
The St. Jude Burse No. 2 ...	£1,446	18	6	now	£1,516	18	6
Holy Child of Prague Burse ...	87	5	0		89	5	0
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Burse ...	39	10	0		41	10	0
Our Lady of Lourdes Burse ...	31	10	0		32	0	0
Immaculate Conception B.V.M. Burse	88	10	0		90	10	0
Little Flower Burse ...	43	5	0		543	5	0
Sacred Heart Burse ...	29	0	0		30	0	0
St. Anthony Burse ...	31	5	0		33	0	0
St. Joseph Burse ...	293	0	0		793	0	0
Carmelite Holy Souls Burse ...	0	0	0		0	0	0

May we say "God Bless you all," and wish you  
a Holy and Happy Christmas, and  
many blessings in 1962.

Our Lady keep you !      Yours in Carmel

*M. E. Lynch O.C.*