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BOOKS AND READING

—BY— BROTHER AZARIAS

OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

SEVENTH EDITION
REVISED AND ENLARGED



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TO THE MEMORY

OF THE RIGHT REVEREND

Monsignor Jas. A. Corcoran, D. P.,

These Lages

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MEMOIR

OF

BROTHER AZARIAS, F. S. C.

Brother Azarias, (Patrick Francis Mullany) who died at the Hotel Champlain, near Plattsburg, on August 20th, 1893, was a native of Ireland. His parents emigrated to the United States when he was a child, and his boyhood was passed at their home in Deerfield, N. Y., not far from the residence of Horatio Seymour. with whom, as boy and man, he maintained the most kindly relations. It was at the District school that young Mullany's schooling began. There, however, he did not long remain. His parents desired that he should enjoy the advantage of a more thorough course of studies, and of a sound religious and moral education, and therefore sent him to the Academy of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, in Utica. Studious and gentle, the youth was a favorite with his fellows and teachers, and earned the affection and good will of Brother Justin, then his teacher, and now Provincial of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The serious character of the youth, his love of learn-

ing, the high ideal he entertained of the calling of a teacher, are sufficiently proved by the sacrifices he made at the early age of fifteen; for at that age he joined the disciples of the great de la Salle. That a man of talent should adopt a profession which promises a comfortable livelihood, leisure, social advantages, the delights of an intellectual home, position, and, it may be, even wealth, is not surprising. But how many youths of fifteen become teachers wholly from a love of others? This Patrick Francis Mullany did. Entering the Brotherhood of the Christian Schools, he vowed himself to poverty, to obedience to his superiors, and to a chaste community life; and thus deliberately denied himself all the pleasures and ambitions in the pursuit of which men ordinarily place their happiness. The completeness of the sacrifice a Christian Brother makes will impress itself on those unacquainted with the rule of de la Salle, when they consider that, with everything else men cherish, one gives up the family name. At the age of fifteen, then, Patrick Francis Mullany became Brother Azarias. That his youthful ideal of the teacher's calling never altered, that his sense of the duty of a teacher never diminished, that his love of youth and his desire to aid youth to be knowing and strong never weakened, is proved by the fact that, after thirty years of sacrifice, he was devoted to his community, proud of it, happy in it, and thankful to the good God who had inspired him to give up every-

thing material for the sake of the education of the voung.

Pursuing his studies in the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers, Brother Azarias soon became a useful member of the community, Attheage of eighteen he was permitted to teach, and during the ten following years he held professorships in several of the more important institutions maintained by the Christian Brothers. To the study of English literature he devoted himself especially, though he did not fail to enlarge his acquaintance with the classics, and to pursue the study of modern languages. If his responsibilities were increased, so were his opportunities also, when, in 1875, he was appointed President of Rock Hill College, Maryland. This office he administered so satisfactorily, that he retained it during ten years, and then he was compelled to give up his charge by failing health.

A journey through Europe somewhat improved his health, but the eight latter years of his life were years of suffering. Ill-health, however, did not interrupt his studies, which were continued abroad as well as at home; nor did ill-health put an end to his career as a teacher. During the six years immediately preceding his death, he held the Professorship of English Literature in the "De La Salle Institute," New York City.

At an early age Brother Azarias developed a talent for writing, and this talent he cultivated assiduously during his whole life. Considering his duties as a

teacher, the slight encouragement he received for many years, and his frail health since 1885, both the quantity and the quality of his literary work testify to his patience, his perseverance, and his sense of duty; for all his work was done with the aim of instructing, of educating, of elevating those around him. Having read much, thought much, and stored much intellectual wealth, he was impelled to distribute what he had acquired. Loving truth, he longed to lead others to love it. Knowing from experience the refining influence of good literature, he desired to excite many to cultivate it, not selfishly, but for the advantage of society. Aware of the injurious effects of loose thinking, of bad logic, and of an imperfect acquaintance with history, he sought to correct common errors and to induce men and women to recognize that study and inquiry should precede judgment. Convinced that only by familiarity with the thoughts of the greatest thinkers and artists can the intellectual elevation of American society be assured, he tried to acquaint many with the thought and the art of the greatest writers of our own time, and of the past.

Had one no personal relations with Brother Azarias, the motive that inspired him in his literary work would have been apparent to a reader of any one of his essays or books. He wrote nothing hastily. His purpose was always clear. Merely to please the ear or to excite the imagination, he would not have written a line. He had

a lesson to teach, instruction to give; and it is to the teacher that we owe the agreeable and serviceable books and essays which he published during the twenty years of his career as a writer. His volumes on "Old English Thought," the "Philosophy of Literature," "Aristotle and the Christian Schools," "Phases of Thought and Criticism," have been read with profit by many, with pleasure by all who appreciate style, and, notwithstanding criticism, more or less judicious, will be always quoted by writers who deal seriously with English Literature.

Brother Azarias, having knowledge of men, wrote according to this knowledge; and thus appealed, and will appeal, to men, according to their knowledge. Having no common knowledge, he will not appeal to common men. Indeed, such was not his aim. Believing in a God, a Christ, a Divine law, a Providence, and a future life, he appealed to the select; not to the select few, but to the select majority, who, perhaps more silently than they should, accept the great truths of natural and and of revealed religion. A staunch Catholic, Brother Azarias was a Catholic from conviction, as his life proved. Catholicity it was that led him to be and to remain a Christian Brother. With his talents and acquirements, he might have been the President of a socalled University, a legislator, a Minister at a Foreign court. Men of less knowledge and of less ability have held such places.

Thirty years of study, and ten years of rule as President of Rock Hill College, had made Brother Azarias a prudent man, slow in speech. And yet he was an agreeable talker among his friends. Always modest, a good listener, considerate of others, his conversation pleased because of his kindliness and thoughtfulness. He had no harsh word to say of any man. Ideas, opinions, expressions, he criticised, but persons not at all. Criticisms on his own work he read, accepted, or rejected, but never answered. Against his critics he had no personal feeling. He was conscious of his own honesty. That his views could not be gainsaid, occasionally, he would not maintain. As his only aim was to be right, he was ever open to correction. For him, to violate the truth would be criminal; still he did not assume infallibility, but only honest good will.

Brother Azarias had one gift that his writings did not disclose,—a genial sense of humor. Why he concealed this charming quality, I do not know. Perhaps it was through modesty; or, perhaps again, he feared lest a display of humor might seem undignified in a teacher, and especially in a religious. Whatever the reason, it is notable that his happy sense of humor was known only to his friends.

As a man, Brother Azarias was of a lovable, genial character; not only guileless, but generous, hearty, and affectionate. Always simple and unaffected, he made friends everywhere. In gaining them he used no arts.

He was blessed with a soft and gentle voice, and this made a lasting impression on many who met him but once. Among educated men of all religions he had friends, who frequently showed him marks of esteem and regard. He was grateful for all kindnesses, and prompt in showing his gratitude.

Though Brother Azarias treated of many subjects in his written works, he disclosed only so much of himself as a writer may disclose without being personal. Perhaps we shall have, some day, a life of him written by some one who can control his correspondence. Judiciously used, this will tell us more than we have thus far learned of one of our most competent and zealous American educators. By education, and in heart and soul, Brother Azarias was an American. American life, American thought, American education, American progress,-for these he worked from the beginning to the end; and though with no narrow spirit, yet, as a citizen of the Empire State, and as a resident, during the best years of his life, of the City of New York, it was to New York State and to our Imperial City that he looked, more than all, for the advancement of our beloved country in the way of culture, of taste, of principle, and of truth. His father, I have heard, was a "republican" in politics; but Brother Azarias was a true son of liberty, knowing no party, and hoping only for the freedom and the welfare of all our citizens, whatever their race or religion. All honest men he respected. Good principles

he supported. Of bad principles he was the foe, A talented, capable, right-minded educator is a valuable servant of the State. The death of such an educator is a serious loss to the State; and therefore Brother Azarias will be mourned by all good citizens. The Regents of our University, before whose convocations he has more than once spoken thoughtfully, will miss him. The members of the Concord and Farmington schools of philosophy, among whom he counted several warm friends, will miss him. The "Catholic Summer School," of which he was one of the founders, and in whose behalf he labored so earnestly, will miss him. And yet, in his works, he will live; winning esteem and affection from many who never saw him in the flesh. His fellow-Catholics have an advantage and a satisfaction that many outside of their faith may not have. To the Catholic, Brother Azarias is alive, not in his books only, but with a real living life. Catholics may commune with him, living; love him, living. From them he is separated, but only for a short time. The hope of meeting one's beloved teacher, to-morrow or the next day, brings joy to the dutiful pupil. And what greater consolation can be vouchsafed to a friend than the assurance that,-to-morrow or the next day,-he will be again in the company of the friend that regretfully he parted from!

JOHN A. MOONEY.

PREFACE.

The substance of the present Lecture was read before the Cathedral Library Reading Circle of New York City, at the request of its Director, the Rev. Joseph H. McMahon. At the same request it is now given to the public in book form. The author has not attempted within the limits of a single paper to cover the whole scope of the subject; but the few general rules and principles which he has laid down may be extended, in their application, to any number of subjects. The Lecture is reprinted, with a few points somewhat more developed, from the pages of the Catholic World.

In this Third Edition the author has made revisions and additions with a view of rendering the little book less unworthy of the cordial reception it met with. He has sought to answer a few more questions on books and reading. If he has dwelt at some length upon Wordsworth and Browning, it is in order to diminish the difficulty readers find in grasping the meaning and importance of these poets.

DE LA SALLE INSTITUTE, NEW YORK, DECEMBER 20, 1890.