

SAINT LOUIS

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Saint Louis by Marius Sepet

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WITH A PREFACE BY
GEORGE TYRRELL, S.J.



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE plan adopted in this volume demands a word of explanation. The reader must not look for a history of St Louis, that is, for a chronological and methodical account of the actions of his life and the events of his reign. This would not, in our opinion, correspond to the general design of the collection in which this essay is to find a place. We have thought it better to make a study of the character and sanctity of this great Christian and royal person, considered under the different aspects of his private and public life. It has been our ideal to present to our readers a series of historic pictures in stained glass, devoted to the life of St Louis.

In the different compartments of this series, or, to speak without metaphor, in the successive chapters of this work, we have made large use of the text of writers contemporary with the holy king, necessarily made intelligible to modern readers. We have also given as far as possible the very words of the holy king. Nothing throws more light on the mind of St Louis than his *Instructions* to his son Philip and to his daughter Isabel. We cannot know and describe him better than his confessor, Geoffrey of Beaulieu, his chaplain, William of Chartres, and the confessor of his wife, Queen Margaret, whose

writings afford such a valuable summary of the inquiry made for his canonisation. Wherever it was possible we have used the words of the Sire de Joinville, the good seneschal, who has in our own day found an editor and interpreter worthy of him in the person of M. Natalis de Wailly. We hope that our quotations may induce our readers to draw more largely and directly from this incomparable source which now flows with limpid clearness.

From a somewhat different point of view we feel the same desire with respect to the valuable works which have guided us in the choice and reproduction of the original texts, and which have supplemented these texts. Since the reader will not find here a history of St Louis, it may be sought in the interesting books which are quoted in the ensuing pages. We feel that we shall not have laboured in vain if we add to the readers of M. Wailly, of M. Felix Faure and M. Lecoy de la Marche. We must also mention particularly M. Elie Berger's remarkable work on Blanche of Castile, and on the relations between Louis IX. and Innocent IV. A Protestant by birth and education, we wish that others of the same religion understood as well as he does the duty of historic impartiality, and the respect due from all good Frenchmen to the national religion and the catholic glories of their country. We have also profited, although not without reserve, from the sincere homage recently rendered by an honest freethinker, M. Ch. Langlois, to St Louis's memory in a Parisian review.

An appearance of learned research is not altogether

suitable to the collection of which this volume forms a part. But in a study conducted on these lines the case is rather exceptional. The reference to so many authors cannot be troublesome to the reader, and we flatter ourselves that this little book, in addition to its special and immediate object, may be useful to future historians of St Louis as a storehouse of information. So noble a subject cannot indeed fail to become increasingly attractive to men of capable minds and descriptive powers. We wish the glory of St Louis, like that of Joan of Arc, to increase ever more and more in France.

