

A Conversion

obtained through the intercession of the Blessed Little Flower of Jesus



Mrs. Martin Buance with her two little grand-daughters, Rosalia and Serafina Buance

DURING more than four years, Father Leo stationed at Itogon, had been the only missionary for all Benguet, and on various occasions the zealous man had asked his superiors to provide him with at least one companion, that they might labor with more profit in the Vineyard of the Lord. Through his persistence, Father José was put in charge of all the part of Benguet to the west of the river Agno, while the east side remained in charge of

Father Leo. This was about 7 years ago.

The two missionaries went exploring one day and, passing through the towns of Atok and Kapangan, arrived at last at Tublay, at the house of an Igorot named Buance. At various times before, Buance had been visited by Father Leo and pagan though he was, he had always received the priest with Christian hospitality. On such occasions he had been the chief listener to the instructions of Father Leo, but the

poor man had never been able to make up his mind to wash his immortal soul in the saving waters of Holy Baptism and to become a child of God and of the Holy Catholic Church.

It had happened that the poor Igorot fell sick and suffered much from cancer in the stomach. Without doubt the good Buance, so far a pagan, had to die. Said Father Leo: "We must prepare our friend Buance to go straight to Heaven." The husband of one of the daughters of the house promised that he would be moved the next day to the Baguio hospital, where Father José might baptize him, since the sick man did not wish to receive the Sacrament of Redemption that day.

Because of some pressing business, Father José had to go to San Fernando, La Union, and Father Leo had to return to his home at Itogon. Father José had a great devotion to the Servant of God, Blessed Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, and before he left for the town mentioned, he knelt and said with all his heart: "O God, our Father, let Buance be my first convert! Blessed Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, take care of the poor Igorot; if I am able to baptize him, I will give him the name Martin, in memory of your noble family."

It was the month of August, the time of typhoons, and all day torrents of water had fallen. Spent with weariness and drenched as well by the constant rain, Father José, returning from his journey to San Fer-

nando, reached Baguio at night. Here the Parish Priest said to him: "They have come from Tublay to summon you; Buance is dying. I went myself but, alas! he does not wish to be baptized; his married daughter is the chief cause of his obstinacy to the grace of God."

"What a shame! But I will go and see what I can do tomorrow," replied Father José.

"God bless your undertaking! I will order prayers for the poor creature."

Tublay is three hours' journey from Baguio. The next day the typhoon had become stronger; the narrow, rocky path had become a very torrent of water. Wet to the skin, Father José arrived at the summit of the mountain, from which he was able to see, below, the house of the poor dying man. First he had to drive evil spirits out of the house and, in spite of the violent rain, he stopped and began to recite the short formula of exorcism. After he had sprinkled holy water which he carried in a small bottle, he descended the hill and entered the house. Poor Buance was in the center of the house upon the floor. Around him was his married daughter and other Igorots, who gazed defiantly at the Father with a meaning look, as if to say: "It is our turn now — we do not need you here." The Father spoke directly to Buance's daughter and in a sweet but firm voice said: "Rise, sit there, and not a word." Then, with a relic of Blessed Theresa (sweet lily!)

hid beneath the pillow, and the image of the Servant of God upon a small table, he sat beside the sick man, and a tender and important conversation began.

Not more than half an hour passed, when there resounded in the room the words of salvation for the happy Buance: "Martin, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Ten days after, Martin died; Father José arranged the burial and, before he closed the coffin, he placed in the hand of his convert, the image of the Flower of Jesus (fair

Dove of Heaven!).

He was the first adult Igorot baptized by Father José, and he went quickly to heaven to plead the cause of his unfortunate countrymen. Without doubt, Blessed Theresa helped him much, for the result has been splendid; all the Buance family is now Catholic, many Igorot families of Tublay have been converted since, and in that steep mountainous country covered with lovely evergreen pines, a chapel will be erected, the first perhaps in the whole world to bear the name of The Blessed Little Flower of Jesus.

Englands' first Martyr

His name was Alban. It was a time of persecution. A Christian priest came flying from his pursuers and took shelter in Alban's house. Alban was still a heathen, but he hid the Christian priest, out of pure kindness and pity for a hunted man. He observed the devotion of his guest. How fervent it was and how firm. What a consolation and joy the priest seemed to find in prayer. Alban's heart was touched. He listened to the priest and became a believer.

Meanwhile the persecutors had found out where the Christian was hidden, and came to search Alban's house. Then Alban, putting on the dress of his hidden teacher, delivered himself into their hands, as if he had been the fugitive; and in this way the priest could escape. But Alban, because he refused to betray his guest, and say where he was gone, and because he refused to offer sacrifice to the idols he used to worship, was scourged and led forth to be put to death. The spot

for the execution was a beautiful meadow, clothed with flowers, on a little rising ground: a fit theatre for a martyr's triumph. He was unmercifully beheaded and, where his blood was shed, there now stand a church and town which bear his name.

The soldier who was appointed to put Alban to death was so moved by his victim's resignation and greatness of heart that he chose rather to suffer death with Alban than to have the guilt of being his executioner.

Let us remember this when we are tempted to be selfish. Let us remember that the first great deed of Christianity in England, the first instance in which it showed its power, was in making a man die to save a stranger's life, and draw on another to die with him. And if a God-man died for us all on the cross of Calvary, it was to win us all for heaven and to teach us by His example that christian charity shows itself by deeds and sacrifices.