

QUOTATIONS FROM THE LETTERS OF FRANK DUFF
PERTAINING TO MARIA LEGIONIS

The Legion Journal which was due to appear last week has been held up for a further period of a week by a difficulty in clearing the paper through the Customs. The Editor and his staff have done their work well, and the Journal is going to be a pleasing production. It is unique amongst its type of magazine, inasmuch as it is all Legion. You will find therein no articles about Sunrise on the Apennines, or the Poetry of Francis Thompson. The contents are all honest-to-goodness Legion stuff, and very readable at that. In the next issue the "Feature" idea will be more developed i.e. Answers to Correspondents, and other special columns.

I presume that the Legion Journal continues to reach you quarterly and to keep you in touch with all the movements throughout the world. These are now becoming very wide and very significant. It is evident that the Legion is destined to play a vital part in the future fortunes of the Church. Already it has definitely taken its place among the great movements of all time. May this continue and even improve. Certainly it has been the privilege of the Legion to mobilise the ordinary simple people in the battle of the Church and at the same time to teach them the true position and greatness of Our Blessed Lady.

I am very glad to hear of the success of your efforts to increase the sale of the Legion journal – so much so that you are proposing to increase the next order again. If all places were able to do what you are managing it would ease many of the trials of the zealous Committee in charge of Maria Legionis.

I think it would be a good thing to avail as far as possible of that offer of the Southern Cross to give you publicity each week. There are several arguments in favour of this. The first is the necessary duty of informing people about the Legion. I would say that in Australia the Legion has been more or less shut out of publicity. We must seek to interest Priests and possible recruits for the Legion ranks. Furthermore, if the general public is more or less acquainted with the works and ideals of the Legion, they are more calculated to receive the Legionaries well in their rounds and to co-operate with them. Again, if such a series of articles were well done they could hold up to the whole population the standards of idealism, and in this manner uplift the entire population. Suppose for instance such a column placed before itself as its first intention the making of every Australian Catholic an Auxiliary Legionary, and as a second the spreading of the Legion Journal. In these ways great good could be done, not merely to the Legion, but as I have suggested to Catholic Australia. Therefore I think that you ought to jump at the offer, and if you possibly can do it yourself. Maria Legionis would always provide you with plenty of stuff to fall back on should the more local news tend to fail.

I note from your letter that the great difficulty of your work in Lisbon is the lack of workers. One of the special features of the Legion is its power to attract people to its ranks. Before the start of the Legion in Dublin – and indeed in all places – the cry was just the same as yours, that people willing

to work could not be found. At the present moment, there are 3,000 active adult members in the City of Dublin alone, a number which is still growing steadily. The starting of the Legion in Lisbon would be attended by exactly the same result. Beginning with one little branch, a steady process of growth would take place which would eventually give you many branches and a multitude of willing capable, disciplined workers. Possessing these, you would be able to map out all the needs and cover those needs perfectly. The reading of the Legion Journal will help you to see the rather wonderful spirit which is evoked in people when they become Legionaries.

My dear Father McCarthy,

I am grateful for your letter of the 19th instant, even though the news it contains is not pleasant. I admit that I am not surprised. Several applications from different quarters have already been made to the Bishop, and he has turned them all down. This was the most promising of all attempts up to the present, but it has not come to pass...

I hope that you will keep closely in touch with the Legion, so that should the inopportune become the opportune, at any moment you will be ready to take off at the pistol shot. I suggest that you read the Legion journal regularly. It would be a splendid link between us.

Dear Mother Angela

It is a long time since I have written to you, but this does not mean that you are out of mind. Far from it, as perhaps those articles in Maria Legionis will prove to you. By the way, I hope that you are in touch with these. They will bring back to you the notable events of the past of which you were so great a part.

Some time ago I sent two worthy young gentlemen armed with a camera up to see you with strict instructions that they are to secure a photograph of you. It shows what a great Legionary you are that you were able to put them to such wholesale flight. However, you did not reckon with the fact that you were up against Legionary spirit also. You must know that the Legion always gets its man – as a certain well known Police Force makes a boast of doing. I have recently approached your Mother General on this subject and as a result I am furnished with a habeas corpus. She has authorised us to secure a photograph of you and to publish the same in the next issue of Maria Legionis. I do hope that you will have no objection to this. The Mother General says that it would be for the advantage of all concerned, and although you are the victim I think it will be in a worthy cause. Therefore, I am getting together another camera team and despatching them to you. When would be a suitable time for you to receive them?

I am wondering among other things if you have ever come across the Legion journal. I am sure from the tone of your letter that it would interest you greatly. If you have not already seen it I would be happy to forward you some back numbers. The reading of these would increase your interest for the Legion, and enable you to keep in closer touch with it. Especially I would draw your attention to an article in the last Christmas number relative to the True Devotion.

Thank you for the photograph of yourself, taken by Fr. Jienez and forwarded to us. It is a real happiness to know the appearance of those with whom we are corresponding. I have passed the photograph to Bro. John Murray, and it is his intention to reproduce it in the pages of Maria Legionis. Always in the future bear in mind the need of the Legion Journal for good clear

photographs of Legionary things. But endeavour to make these interesting in their type. Try to see that each one presents some special feature about it which would cause it to stand out in the pages of Maria Legionis. When there is a group, arrange it in such a fashion as to give it some element of the special. Most of the groups of Legionaries which come to us are so unenterprisingly arranged as to look one just like another.

You remark that you find Maria Legionis a most valuable supplement to the Handbook. Actually it is imperative that Legionaries, if they really want to be good members, should read the Legion Journal. If one does not read it, there is a very great tendency to stagnate. Unless members have before them the works and new ideas of other places, they will find that they will tend to lag behind. Try to get over to your fellow-members this need for the reading of Maria Legionis. The circulation in America is deplorable, so bad in fact that there is now talk of ceasing to print the U.S.A. edition. That would represent a sad confession of failure.

Your poem is a pleasing production and it would be a privilege for us to be allowed to publish it in the columns of the Legion journal. But it possesses in our eyes what you will be astonished to hear described as a serious fault, namely that it is a glorification of Ireland, and Dublin in particular, as being the Legion's birthplace. The Concilium is careful to keep from sounding that note, for its echoes would not be so good. It would be regarded by other places as being a species of boasting, and it would evoke in those other places similar exhibitions of national feeling. We must beware of these things in the Legion. Already the Legion has far advanced in its programme of encouraging men of every Nation and every point of view to accept service in its ranks and there to transcend their differences. That Legionary unity is a delicate plant, and it must be safe-guarded from the things which would menace it – like beating national drums for instance. That is the reason why you will never find in the Legion Journal any flamboyant references to the Irish origin of the Legion or any suggestion that the Legion in Ireland is better than any other place. This is a very wise attitude for the Legion to adopt and I am sorry that your poem should become an incidental victim to it.

I suggest that the first step to be taken in awakening real interest in the Foreign Missions is to bring about the reading of a Mission journal. I feel that if this be not secured, the interest which will be aroused will be evanescent in its character. Therefore the ideal should be to place such a journal in every home. As a second point, I do not think that you will effectively secure this merely by recommending the journal from the pulpit, or even by carrying out an initial canvass for subscribers. To both of the foregoing must be added the actual delivery of the paper. I suggest that this should be done by a Junior Praesidium or Praesidia. Incidentally it provides excellent work for Junior Legionaries. Two of the Senior Legionaries should be Officers of each Junior Praesidium. That work of Officering could be recognised as the discharging of their work obligation to the Senior Praesidium.

With the background of knowledge and solid interest which the regular reading of the Missionary journal would create, it would be possible to stimulate the people to a real devotion to the Missions, so that they would aspire to giving their children to its service, and help by prayer and by money subscriptions. In this latter connection by the way, beware of turning the Legion into a money-collecting agency even for a cause so sacred as the Missions.

It is good of you to make that proposal regarding the Legion Journal. To most of such periodicals that would be a boon, but not to us. Our present position is that we are doing better than your proposition. We manage to make a profit on each issue, whereas the proposal would only mean that we would get it without loss.

Moreover, we have no advertisements, as you will have seen. If we were willing to incorporate these latter, we would be doing very well financially. However, this exclusion of advertising matter represents deliberate policy on our part, persevered in the teeth of expert advice to the effect that it would be impossible for the Journal to pay its way without advertisements. But even from the first issue the Journal demonstrated the contrary.

As things are, I do not think that the Legion could be induced to revise this policy – even for the richest golden harvest. But at the same time, we are obliged for your kind interest which, as I say, might in other circumstances have been beneficial to us.

The zealous little band of Legionaries which produces the Legion Journal - all of course unpaid - has come to me with a suggestion that a bound volume, containing the six numbers of the paper which have appeared to date should be presented to His Eminence Cardinal Pacelli, the Legate at Budapest. I did not like to discourage their idea and I wonder if Your Excellency would find an opportunity of giving the volume informally to His Eminence? The mere fact that you presented it to His Eminence would make much of the Journal which looks so important to the Editor and Staff and would be compensation for the very considerable labours which are entailed in the production of the Journal.

My dear Dr. Donovan,

I was delighted to get your letter of the 14th ultimo and to observe therefrom how determinedly you are keeping up, on behalf of the Legion, the pressure that originally brought it into existence in America. I have recently read your article in the Register. It is a pleasure to see that you are now engaged on one for the Sign. I will try within the next week or so to get down something of the kind that you ask for. But I should think that a glance through the issues of the Legion journal, which have appeared to date, would afford a far better conspectus than anything I could get together.

I wonder if copies of Maria Legionis, the Legion Journal, have reached you yet. They have just come to hand here. It really represents a great achievement for the volunteer editorial staff. The whole production is eminently readable. We ought to make a terrific effort to get it into the hands of the Auxiliary members. It is really more important that they should be readers than the Active Members, who are already in fair touch with their organisation. In most cases the Auxiliary Members have little or no touch.
