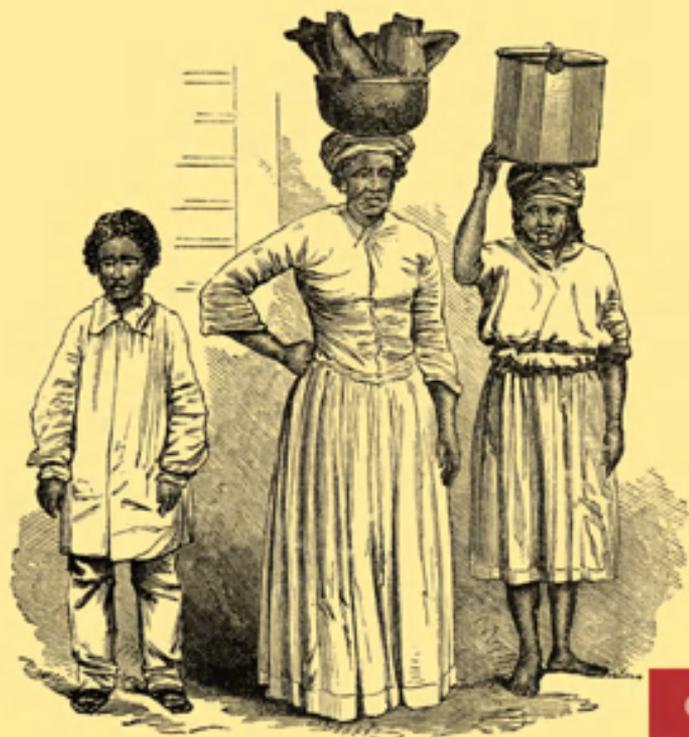


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# CARDINAL LAVIGERIE AND THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

EDITED BY RICHARD F. CLARKE



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In 1889 the Jesuit Richard F. Clarke published this biography of Charles Lavigerie (1825–1892), the French cardinal and Primate of Africa. From the moment of his arrival in Algeria in 1868, Lavigerie became a key, if sometimes controversial, figure in organising Catholic missions in Africa. In 1874 he founded the Society of Missionaries for Africa, otherwise known as the White Fathers after the white Arab dress they wore. Lavigerie's later career was devoted to the battle against slavery and in 1888 he conducted a campaign in several European capitals denouncing the practice. Clarke's book, which appeared a year after Lavigerie's visit to London, provides an account of the cardinal's career in France and Africa up to that date. It emphasises and praises Lavigerie's anti-slavery message, referring to him in the preface as 'the apostle of the slaves of all Africa.'

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CARDINAL LAVIGERIE

AND THE

AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE



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AND THE

## AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

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TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

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## PREFACE

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ENGLAND has for a century and more taken her place in the forefront of the anti-slavery crusade. She has long since abolished slavery in all countries under her own sway. She has rejoiced over its abolition in the United States of America; her cruisers keep guard along the African coast to prevent, if possible, or at least to check, the export of slaves from thence: it is her earnest desire to penetrate into the heart of the African continent itself, and destroy the traffic in human flesh, with all its accompanying miseries.

Various circumstances have hitherto combined to defeat her designs of mercy. The conflicting interests of the European Powers and the mutual hostility of Continental nations have rendered impossible the united action which alone could produce a permanent effect. The complications of the Eastern Question have entangled the position in Northern Africa. But, above all, the fierce opposition of Mohammedanism to any European interference with its career of conquest and of crime has succeeded in frustrating the efforts of the liberator, even when nominally supported by a Mohammedan Government. One expedition after another has failed in the face of the deadly enmity of the Crescent

to the Cross, and of the double-dealing, rapacity, and corruption of Egyptian officials in the Soudan and on the Upper Nile.

What has long been needed for the uprooting of the traffic which degrades and depopulates Africa, and inflicts on her children revolting cruelties and sufferings that call out to heaven for vengeance, is an Apostle. A man fired with the love of God and his fellow-men can work wonders and attain results that diplomacy and conferences and the action of the Powers can never accomplish. Such a man must, of necessity, have a difficult, it may be an apparently impossible, task. He can scarcely expect himself to witness the success of his work. He may pass to his reward with the end apparently as far off as ever. He is certain to meet with every sort of discouragement, opposition, abuse, and ridicule. He will be regarded as a visionary, an enthusiast, perhaps as a charlatan and an impostor. But if he himself is defeated, his cause will ultimately triumph. If he has to sacrifice himself for the cause of the slave, the sacrifice will be accepted as the condition of Africa's redemption from her present bondage.

Such an apostle, or one whom we may hope that God has chosen for the apostolate, is the subject of the following memoir. The name of Cardinal Lavigerie is already familiar to Englishmen. He has visited England and given a fresh stimulus to her zeal in the cause of the slave. He is at the present time struggling against difficulties enough to dishearten any ordinary man. Jealousy, animosity, suspicion, the accusation of political and self-interested motives, are doing their worst to ruin his work. His proposal of

a Congress at Lucerne was unfortunately rendered impossible by the French elections, which were impending at the time. He has been accused of postponing it in order that France might dominate at its assemblies, and of being actuated by a desire to place other countries at a disadvantage to his own.

It is difficult to refute such charges as these ; but the fact that the programme of his opponents is that which he had already determined upon, independently of the representations of his assailants, is the clearest proof of his disinterested motives, and of his devotion not to any national or political interests, but to the interests of our common humanity and to the cause of God.

Yet the following pages are perhaps the best evidence of what are the aims of Cardinal Lavigerie and the spirit that has actuated his life. His noble self-devotion is not the growth of a day or a year. It is the growth of a lifetime spent in the service of God and of his fellow-men. In his episcopate in France he was the apostle of his diocese. In Algeria he was the apostle of the Arabs, and that under circumstances which rendered his apostolate a most difficult one. At the present moment he is the apostle of the slaves of all Africa. Many may doubt the possibility of success in the crusade that he is preaching throughout Europe. Some may regard any sort of armed interference as likely to do more harm than good. Some there are whose practical acquaintance with Africa has led them to believe that it is from the English settlements on the Western Coast that the work must be begun ; since there, and there alone, the power of Islam is not yet

dominant. But all must allow that there is no man living who has the power to effect the regeneration of Africa that is at present in the hands of Cardinal Lavigerie, and that, if the Congress of European Powers is to take any active steps for the suppression of slavery, they must listen to his counsels and avail themselves of his personal knowledge of the country and the people to whose cause he has devoted himself from the first day that he set foot upon the soil of Africa.

In presenting this account of Cardinal Lavigerie's life and labours, we have to acknowledge our indebtedness to Mgr. Grussenmeyer's interesting book, *Vingt-cinq années d'épiscopat en France et en Afrique*.

R. F. C.

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PART THE FIRST

CARDINAL LAVIGERIE



# CARDINAL LAVIGERIE



## CHAPTER I

### LIFE IN FRANCE

CHARLES-MARTIAL ALLEMANT-LAVIGERIE was born at Bayonne on October 31, 1825. His father occupied a good position in the Customs, and his mother, Laure-Louise Latrilhe, was a daughter of the Director of the Royal Mint at Bayonne. Both parents were held in general esteem on account of their high moral character and strict religious principles.

From his earliest years the future Cardinal gave unmistakable signs of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state, those who were his companions still remembering how he loved to give everything a religious colouring and re-enact in his very games the ceremonies of the Church which he had witnessed. As he was the eldest son, his father had formed views of a different nature in regard to his future career; yet when he saw how decided was the boy's vocation, he had the good sense not to oppose it: Charles was therefore sent at an early age to a school in his native town, and subsequently to the Diocesan Seminary at Larresorre, where he remained until he was fifteen.

In regard to this period of his life we cannot do better than quote the words of the illustrious Cardinal himself, written on the occasion of the death of Monseigneur Lacroix, bishop of Bayonne :—

‘The death of this memorable prelate has deeply touched me, and this for two reasons. First, because he was, in my eyes, the chief member of the French Episcopate, being moreover the bishop of my native diocese ; and, secondly, because he played a part in the most decisive actions of my life.

‘I was about thirteen when I received from his hands the sacrament of confirmation. He had at that period been recently consecrated, and, looking back along the vista of years, I can in my mind’s eye still see him entering the cathedral, his brow already whitened by the snows of age. I can see the place where I sat, in the nave just opposite the pulpit ; I can hear his sermon ; nay, more, I believe that I could repeat it almost verbatim, were I to try to do so, for the sentiments with which his words inspired me thrilled to the very centre of my being, and have ever since remained deeply printed on my heart.

‘But my reminiscences do not end here. In the course of the following year, as I felt an ever-growing certainty in regard to my vocation, my father presented me to the Bishop. With equal fidelity can my memory recall every circumstance connected with that first interview. Apparently so unimportant, it was to hold an important place in deciding my destiny. I can see with the utmost distinctness the reception-room of the episcopal palace, its ample proportions, magnified by my childish imagination, its furniture covered with gold-coloured velvet, the very sofa upon which the good bishop was seated. My heart beat loudly as I found myself for

the first time in close proximity to a violet cassock. But the genial kindness of the bishop's manner soon set me at my ease.

“So you have a vocation to the priesthood, my child,” he said, as he drew me to his side and gently stroked my hair.

“Yes, Monseigneur,” I replied, emboldened by the encouraging tone of his voice, my resolution meanwhile getting the better of my self-distrust.

“And what is your reason for wishing to be a priest?” he asked in the next place.

“In order that I may have a country parish!” I exclaimed.

‘My father stared at me, astonished to hear of these rural predilections, the secret of which had never been confided to him. The bishop smiled and said: “You shall first of all go to the Seminary at Larresorre, and then you shall be whatever God pleases.”

‘He saw more clearly than I could do what was to be my lot in life. I went to the Seminary, it is true; but whither have not my wandering footsteps led me since then? The country presbytery has never been anything more than the dream of my childhood, and sometimes, it must be confessed, one of the regrets of my later years, amid the varied turmoil and agitation which has fallen to my share. But God has led me hither and thither at His own good pleasure, according to the prophetic words of Monseigneur Lacroix, and thus it has come to pass that I am writing these lines amid the ruins of Carthage, and not in some quiet corner of my native province.

‘Strange as it may sound, it is none the less true that the bishop, who, when he thus addressed me, more than forty years ago, seemed to me quite an old man,

has grown younger in my eyes, in proportion as I have myself advanced in life, and have found my head prematurely blanched by the scorching rays of an Eastern sun. Indeed the day came at last when I found myself quite as old as he.

‘ I told him this on the occasion of my last visit to France, several years ago. I chanced to fall in with him as he was walking on the beach one summer evening, accompanied by his faithful Vicar-General, M. Franchistegny, and his devoted servant Ernest, his old-fashioned carriage following slowly at a short distance. If the bishop had confirmed me, it was M. Franchistegny who had prepared me for my first communion, and, finding myself thus unexpectedly thrown into their company, it was only natural that a flood of bygone memories should rush in upon me. I uttered my thoughts aloud, and my two companions seemed equally interested with myself in thus recalling the past. “ You must own,” I said in conclusion, “ that it is a very uncommon thing for an archbishop, who can boast a snow-white beard and has attained to my mature period of life, to find himself strolling along with the bishop who confirmed him on one side, and the priest who prepared him for his first communion on the other. The strangest part of the story is that I look the oldest of the three.”

‘ Here Monseigneur Lacroix interrupted me. “ Do you forget that I am over eighty, while you have scarcely passed your fiftieth birthday ? ”

‘ “ What you say is perfectly true,” I answered, with a smile, “ but permit me to remind your lordship that there are various methods of computing the length of our existence in this world. One plan is to count the number of years we have lived, and another to reckon up the