

CHAPTER SEVENNOTRE DAME DE L'HERMITAGE

According to Father Bourdin,(1) who in the 1830s wrote what he knew of those early years of Marcellin Champagnat's congregation of teaching Brothers, the assistance offered early in 1824 by Bishop de Pins exceeded all Marcellin's hopes. Bourdin wrote, "*He had thought, in the time of Fr. Bochard, to make a little oratory, to be wholly engaged in his project; oh, my God! He would be so happy! He accomplished even more (than he ever dreamed of); was he not happy!*"(2) He could now dream of greater expansion than anticipated. For this, he knew that a substantial centre-point was needed. Father Rouchon, Parish Priest of Valbenoîte, had already asked (17th March 1824) the diocesan authorities that Marcellin's Brothers be housed in the abbey he had bought.(3) Marcellin himself, when walking between Lavalla and St. Chamond, had often cast longing eyes towards a sheltered section

1. Fr. Bourdin lived with the Brothers at the Hermitage from 1828 till 1831.

2. "Il avoit pensé, du temps de M. Bochard, faire un petit oratoire, être tout à son œuvre; non, mon Dieu! je serois trop heureux! Il a fait plus, et pas heureux ...-" (M. Bourdin, Notes de M. Bourdin, FMS Archives, Rome: c.1830, p. 28). The difficulties referred to would be such items as the building of the Hermitage and the many problems that ensued. The "little oratory" referred to one at Lavalla, since the next sentence of Bourdin's notes mentioned that Fr. Seyve helped in this. Less than 15 days after the enthronement of Bishop de Pins at Lyons, the Archiépiscopal Council took note of the existence of Marcellin's Institute by having written in its Register:

"3rd March 1824 - Father Champagnat, curate at Lavalla, in the canton of St. Chamond, has succeeded in forming Brothers for the Schools; agreed that he be encouraged in this good work." (Archives de l'Archevêché de Lyon, "Registre des DÉlibérations du Conseil de Mgr l'Eveque de Lyon, Administrateur Apostolique du diocèse de Lyon, cahier premier: 25 février 1824 - 7 mars 1827).

3. It is of interest to note that in the Register of the Archdiocesan Council where it refers to the discussion of this matter of 17th March 1824, the word "Institute" was used when referring to Marcellin's group of Brothers. (J. Coste & G. Lessard, Origines Maristes (1786-1836), Rome, 1961, Vol. 1, Document 96, p. 311).



Photo taken from Lavalla area showing the Soulage Dam on the Gier River, below which the first houses shown on the right are part of the Hermitage buildings. The town of Izieux is where houses are seen in centre background. St. Chamond is out of view in valley on the right of photo.



The Hermitage viewed from Bonzieux, a small hamlet to the west of Hermitage.

of the Gier river valley.(4) This location, bounded on the east and west by steep mountain escarpments, with vegetation of oak tree dominance reaching almost to their summits, was where Marcellin was soon to erect a substantial building that was to become the cornerstone of his Institute. This building, with additions later added, is still used by the Marist Brothers. (i.e. 1982).

The French national elections of 1824 returned to power the Ultra-Royalist Catholic party. On 4th April 1824 the new government entrusted primary education to the Catholic bishops. While this was a wonderful boon in theory for the Church, in practice it meant that the newly appointed Archbishop-Administrator of Lyons found himself confronted with a heavy schools' programme. As Hosie later put it:

"Looking around for aides, Archbishop de Pins saw in Marcellin Champagnat an important ally."(5)

We might note that the second monarch of the Restoration period, Charles X, succeeded to the French throne in September of that year. Clerical control of education, already largely secured, was confirmed when the prelate, D. de Frayssinous became Minister of Education.(6) Champagnat lost no time. His first request to Archbishop de Pins was for permission to buy land and on 13th April he was happy to receive a favourable

4. Br. Jean-Baptiste, Vie de Joseph-Benoît-Marcellin Champagnat, Lyons, 1856, Vol. 1, p. 142.

5. S. Hosie, Anonymous Apostle, New York, 1967, p. 74.
Inspector Guillard, whom we have previously discussed in connection with his reports of 1820 and 1822, included in his report of June 1824, "Primary Schools of Saint Chamond:
The Parish Priest, who came from Lyons, assured me that the Bishop in charge of the Diocese had authorised the Brothers of Lavalla. Fr. Brut also added that they had already bought an area in the commune of St. Martin to establish their training house. Already there are no other primary schools in this canton than those of the De La Salle Brothers and those from Lavalla."

("La Rapport de 1824: L'Inspecteur Guillard", Archives Départementales de Rhône, Serie T, Vers. de l'Univ., liasse XXV). It is of interest to note that this was the last word ever written by Inspector Guillard concerning Marcellin's Brothers.

6. He was Bishop of Hermopolis: an honorary title only - Hermopolis being the ancient title of a See.

response from the Diocesan Council, authorising him to acquire land whereon to build a mother-house for his Institute.(7)

It might be remembered that, when discussing Marcellin's seminary years and those seminarians who gathered together to form a group hoping to form a Marist Society, we noted that the future Father Courveille had been recognized as their leader. Marcellin had never forgotten that; and as far as he was concerned, his group of Brothers would eventually form but one section of a future Marist Society which would include priests, brothers and sisters. Anticipating that, with the now present Diocesan backing, his Institute of Brothers would soon gain legal authorisation, Marcellin thought the time opportune for their first leader, Courveille, to be present. Courveille after his ordination in 1816, had been one year at Verrières, two at Rive-de-Gier, and was now finishing 4½ years at Epercieux (Feurs). Following Marcellin's invitation, on 12th May 1824 he moved to Lavalla, there to help Marcellin's group of Brothers.(8) Right from the start he considered himself to be their Superior, but we should note that the Diocesan Council had simply requested him to assist Fr. Champagnat.(9)

At first, certainly, Courveille was greatly to assist Champagnat. Marcellin had remembered how Courveille had helped him in the purchase of the first house at Lavalla. No sooner had Courveille arrived at Lavalla than Marcellin told him of his plans for buying land. Immediately, on 13th May, they both went to the office of Mr. Finaz at St. Chamond and there bought from Mr. Montellier an area of 206 ares of "woods, scrub, rocks, field" in the territory Chez Coulaud, Commune of St. Martin-en-Coailleux.(10) The purchase price was 5,000 francs, payable in one year, interest at 5%. Marcellin and Courveille saw no difficulty with

7. Bulletin de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie, Vol.2, p.702.

8. Coste & Lessard, op. cit. Vol. IV, p. 255.

9. "12th May 1824, Diocesan Council authorises Fr. Courveille to assist Fr. Champagnat in his work with the Brothers". (Archives de l'archevêché de Lyon, reg. délib. 5. p. 17.)

10. Area bought was: 1. an area of woods and bush, situated in the territory Chez Coulaud and containing about 114 ares; 2. two parcels of field, separated by a small creek, together containing about 30 ares, called Field of the Gier; 3. a section of woods and rocks, in all containing about 30 ares.

the payment since the archdiocese had given 8,000 francs (11) for the land purchase and building project. However, as we shall see later, at the end of the "one year" period, only a portion of the purchase price could be paid for want of funds. Vicar-General Cholleton, later this month of May, blessed the first stones of the future building.(12)

Marcellin required that all the Brothers, during their next summer school vacation, should help in the building of their mother-house. To lodge them all near the site, he managed to rent an old house on the left bank of the Gier river, and facing the site of their present construction. Marcellin, as before, lived with his Brothers. He slept on an open balcony all summer, and in winter retired to a loft (hayloft) above the stables. Meanwhile the Brothers slept as best they could in the garret.(13) All rose at four o'clock each morning and, when dressed, gathered together at a spot amongst the trees which had been set up as a makeshift chapel. An old chest of drawers became the altar and a bell was suspended from the branch of an oak tree. A small temporary three-sided structure had been put together within which, besides the altar, only Marcellin himself and a few Brothers could fit; the remainder assisted at Mass outside this structure in the open air.(14)

Of course, professional builders had to be employed for the basic essentials of the construction.(15) The Brothers, however, quarried and carried the stones, dug sand, made mortar and assisted the stonemasons in as many ways as possible. It is of interest to note that, during the twenty years that Champagnat was almost constantly engaged in building in various localities, there never occurred any bad accidents either to himself or to any of the Brothers. Nevertheless, one of the professional

11. M. Bourdin, Notes de M. Bourdin sur les Origines des Frères Maristes, c. 1830; copy in FMS Archives, Rome, p. 31. Although Bourdin said it was a loan, it seems rather to have been a gift. In one text the sum of 10,000 francs is given.

12. Br. G. Michel, Chronologie de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles, Rome, 1976, p. 39.

13. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, p. 147.

14. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 148.

15. Such as Etienne Roussier, master mason; Benoît Matricon, carpenter; Mr. Robert, plasterer. (Br. Avit, Annales, St.-Genis-Laval, 1880-94, p.37. (FMS Archives, Rome). Avid died in 1894.



The channel of the Gier river as it flows through the Hermitage property below Lavalla.



The back area of the Hermitage. Champagnat first built the construction in the centre of the picture facing the camera. The wing facing the camera and the left wing along the Gier was the original building. The construction on the right was a scholasticate (built 1896). A recreation oval is partly shown in left foreground and this is still used by local schoolchildren. Most of the vegetable garden is obscured by vegetation in foreground.



The Hermitage today. The road from St. Chamond to Lavalla is on the high ridge on right side of photo. There is a driveway down the slope, constructed in Champagnat's time.



Main entrance-door to the Hermitage today (1983).

tradesmen engaged in the building of the Hermitage in its early stage happened to fall from a great height on the side of the construction next to the river. Those who saw the incident said that he would almost certainly have been killed except that he had had the 'one chance in a million' of being able to grasp the branch of a tree during his fall. Although this building of the mother-house would occupy much of Marcellin's time for many months to come, he always remembered that he had founded a religious congregation and so he was constantly aware of his Brothers' needs as religious and as teachers, never allowing any building problems to supplant their basic needs.

Father Cholleton, V.G. had blessed the foundation stone of this Hermitage on 13th May 1824. The construction work was pushed ahead with vigour. Etienne Roussier, the master mason, remarked later that no man worked harder or did the work better than did Father Champagnat. Two Brothers who worked on the site (Brs. Jean-Baptiste and Laurent) later wrote separately, but in agreement, that Father Champagnat had always given the example of extraordinary activity and drive; which they likened to his ardent zeal for the work of God. He was the first to start working each day and was also the last to leave it.(16)

At the meeting in March of this year, Archbishop de Pins had given his approval for the Brothers to wear a distinctive religious costume.(17) Courveille, considering himself to be the Superior, had the Brothers wear a sky blue coat and also a blue cape or cloak.(18) This began during the month of June. Thereafter they were known as "The Blue Brothers" - a name that can still be heard today in St. Chamond. The clothing ceremony was very simple: "it took place in the little room that served as an oratory, at the foot of the altar placed there. There was as yet no register to record the clothings..."(19) However, as we shall see later, Marcellin drastically altered this costume in 1827 after Courveille's departure from the scene.

16. Br. Laurent, Notes du Fr. Laurent sur le P. Champagnat, Hermitage, c. 1842 (FMS Archives), p. 5.

17. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 191.

18. When the Brothers took their vows they would thereafter also wear a woollen cord, a brass cross set in ebony and a white rabat. (J-M. Chausse, Vie de M. l'Abbé Jean-Louis Duplay, Lyons, 1887, Vol.1, p. 277).

19. Br. Avit, Abrégé des Annales de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie, (9 cahiers, 860 p.), 1884, FMS Archives, Rome, p. 54.

Marcellin tolerated Courveille's directions to the Brothers, but he well understood that the Brothers always looked to himself as their real religious leader.(20) He raised no objection when Courveille set about to prepare a Prospectus for the Brothers. Courveille managed to complete this during the month of June, whilst Vicar-General Cholleton gave his Imprimatur (21) to it the following month. This Prospectus reflects the new possibilities for expansion available in 1824, with the building of a new novitiate at the Hermitage enabling many more recruits to be accommodated. It read as follows:(22)

PROSPECTUS OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE
LITTLE BROTHERS OF MARY (23)

The education of the richer class is generally entrusted to the De La Salle Brothers. Everyone knows the good they do in the towns where they are established. But, in accordance with the rules of their Institute, they cannot go less than three together into the places that require them, and since the cost of establishing them is considerable, it follows that most of the parishes, especially those in country areas, cannot enjoy the benefits of this education on account of insufficient resources.

To overcome this problem there has been formed a congregation of teachers under the name of Little Brothers of Mary; at the moment a house for this institute is being built at the Hermitage of Our Lady near St. Chamond, Department of Loire.

Young men who desire to embrace this state of life will be received into the Congregation from the age of 15 to 30 years, provided that they can read, write fairly well and bear a certificate of good life and morals.

20. It might be noted, for chronological interest, that Marcellin's aunt, Louise Champagnat, aged 72, died at Marlihes early in May 1824. This aunt had lived in the Champagnat home, with Marcellin, during the Revolution.
21. "Imprimatur" means ecclesiastical permission to print such material.
22. This was to be the first printed document of Marcellin's Marist project.
23. This is the first official use of this title. "Little Brothers" generally signified, in those days, those who would teach in Primary Schools. Primary schools at this time were generally referred to as "Les Petites Ecoles" (J. Vial, Les Instituteurs, Paris, 1980, p. 32.).

Again, the De La Salle Brothers were known all over France as "Les Grands Frères"; so most other religious teaching groups of men had the adjective "Little" in their title.

"They will serve a novitiate of two years.(24)

On coming to the House, they ought to have an outfit as follows: 1. the religious Habit, 2. a dozen shirts, 3. six towels, 4. four pairs of sheets, 5. a dozen handkerchiefs, 6. two pairs of shoes.

They will pay 400 francs for the two years.

Those who have an inheritance will bring it with them to the House which will guarantee a repayment in this regard if the Novice leaves the Institute; a fee will then be taken out to pay for the novitiate.(25)

The Little Brothers of Mary go into the Parishes that ask for them to the number of three, and even of two.

They ask: 1. 1,200 francs for three Brothers, and 800 for two.(26) This sum will be paid each half year and in advance. (The parishes will be able to obtain from well-to-do parents some donations to cover part of the expenses involved in setting up the establishment).

2. A suitable house provided with the necessary furniture for Little Brothers-Teachers.

3. A garden and some other place for the recreation of the children.

They teach Catechism, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, the principles of French Grammar, Church Music and Sacred History.(27)

They follow in their teaching the method of the De La Salle Brothers.

24. But Br. Jean-Baptiste had come in March and was teaching in October. (At Bourg-Argental). Several others also had a much shortened novitiate.

25. Fr. CHampagnat later received much criticism over this.

26. At this time, the Brothers of the Christian Schools were asking 600 francs per Brother.

27. The teaching of Drawing and Music would later be added.

The Little Brothers of Mary count as much on the prayers of the faithful as on their generosity; they recommend themselves to the goodwill of the Parish Priests of the Diocese of Lyons and the other Dioceses, as well as to charitable persons.

Persons who desire fuller information on the Institute should apply to:

Father Courveille, P.S.G.L., (28) and to Father Champagnat, P.D.R.T., residing for the present at Lavalla, district of St. Chamond (Loire). (29)

Letters should be stamped before being sent.

Seen and permitted to be printed, (30)

Lyons, 29th July 1824.

CHOLLETON. V.G."

In the archives of the Marist Brothers at Rome, there is a copy of the above text that Champagnat had placed in a drawer along with the financial statements of the various Brothers' houses. It consists of

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28. No one is sure of the meaning of the letters, but Father Detours (see below) suggests: Father Superior General of Lyons. ("Prêtre Supérieur Général de Lyon"), Circulaire des Petits Frères de Marie, Vol. 1, Lyons, 1914, p. 143. Fr. Coste accepts this translation of the first two letters, but the final two are still a mystery. (Coste & Lessard, O.M., Vol. 1, p. 327.) Fr. Detours, a Marist Father, was appointed to collect the evidence from sworn witnesses for the Marist Brothers' attempt to have Champagnat declared "Blessed" by the Catholic Church centred in Rome. He travelled extensively in search of people who could contribute something. He also investigated Town and Department Archives. The Commission for this action was set up in Lyons in 1886 under the archbishop.
29. Perhaps it means: Priest, Director, Secretary, Treasurer; but beyond the first two letters standing for "Père Directeur" or "Prêtre Directeur" (which seems reasonable) the final two are still a mystery. (Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 384).
30. This permission to print in no way bound the archdiocese to the establishment in question; at a period, however, when it was hardly ever used (because of canonical prescriptions), giving permission to print had more weight than today.

the original draft, the corrected draft and then a list of furniture. One may also perceive Champagnat's reaction to the printed text produced by the Archdiocese. An examination of the first draft shows clearly enough that Courveille set down the ideas, but it was Champagnat who set down the practical side. The wordy introduction, half the whole text, revealed Courveille's strong loyalty to the Bourbon monarchy along with his revulsion for many of the secular teachers then working in the schools. Many of his references to both monarchy and teachers were similar to what he had written in his consecration formula that had been used at Fourvière. His references to schoolmasters included:

"These men without morals and without religion ... spreading through the country areas where the police have no power ... by their immoral conduct, their impious discourse, their poisonous reading matter ... they are sowing the seeds of corruption and irreligion ... the enemies of good order, of Christian society, and of the monarchy ..." (31)

It was probably Champagnat who put in that they might go in twos to small villages which lacked resources. In the first draft he had written: "*The Little Brothers of Mary ask for only 400 francs for two, and 600 for three ...*", but in the printed diocesan text we read: "*They ask for 1,200 francs for three, or 800 for two.*" Marcellin's reason for such a lowly monetary request was that he intended his Brothers to go where the poor children were. Such schools would open from 1st November till Easter only; that is, during the winter months.(32) The parents needed the children for work in the summer and this is the reason why Marcellin laid great emphasis on the Brothers learning a trade. This would be their means of livelihood during the summer. At the beginning

31. Archives de l'archevêché de Lyon, D'après l'autographe de M. Barou, case 32.

32. The fact that Champagnat originally intended the Brothers for the poor villages is illustrated by referring to Br. Avit's list of the 19 schools functioning in 1833. Amongst them we read:

Lavalla: two Brothers, winter only.
 Marlihes: two Brothers, winter only.
 St. Paul-en-Jarez: three Brothers, in winter.
 Mornant: three Brothers in winter.
 Viriville: three Brothers in winter.

(Br. Avit, Annales de l'Institut, 3^e Etape, pp. 85, 86.)

it had been the making of nails, but soon, at the Hermitage, other occupations would be introduced. It is significant that he built the Hermitage between the river and the cliff. The house was threatened on the one side by floods and, it was thought, on the other by possible rockfalls.(33) There was also the extra manual labour needed to clear enough space for the house adjacent to the cliff. All other dwelling places in this area were built a fair distance from the river; it was only factories that were built by the water. Marcellin wanted to use the running water as the basic power for several new industries for the Brothers. Actually this Mother-House was soon to become a complex of many activities. In the documents we find mention of farming, silk-weaving, clothmaking, ribbon-making, clothes-tailoring, a shoe-making shop, a forge, a carpenter's shop and, of course, there was always a building squad at work. What's more, the establishment also had its own mill and bakery.

It is important to note that Marcellin did not intend the Hermitage to be used solely by the Brothers. Of course, it would contain the new novitiate where new recruits would be trained; but Marcellin also intended that there be within it a school for the poor and, if needed, a place of temporary refuge for needy orphans. Unfortunately Br. Jean-Baptiste makes no mention of orphans in his book, but some were admitted in the early years.(34) In the first draft of the Prospectus, Champagnat had written:

"The education of children in general, and of poor orphans in

33. Yet neither river nor rock proved a very serious threat. Two very serious local floods, one in 1847 and the other in 1872, did no serious harm to the Hermitage whilst there has never yet been any rockfalls. However, the rocks certainly limited Champagnat's building on that side; and still do because of their hardness.

34. Perhaps Br. Jean-Baptiste's silence was intentional, for in a letter to the Bishop of Belley, 3rd December 1839, Marcellin wrote: "...At the start we were going to take in at the Hermitage some day pupils and some boarders. But we were forced to give up this idea, since it led to the loss of a fair number of novices, and these children caused us real harm". ("Lettres de M. Champagnat", FMS Archives, Rome, C RCLA ps. 157-159; SI.183; No. 308, 3rd December, 1839.) In the records there are names of but five orphans who entered, and they stayed for only a short time.

particular, is the aim of our establishment." (35)

The official printed text tended to narrow the scope of Marcellin's project. However, this desire to aid poor children maintained itself in Marcellin's resolve and led to some great charitable works being undertaken by Marcellin in the years that followed.

Nevertheless, throughout 1824 the construction of the Hermitage was paramount in Marcellin's mind. A few months before the start of work at the Hermitage, we read in his register:

"Jean Jacques Couturier received into the house to learn the trade of a draper or a carpenter; he is to pay me for 6 months at 12 francs per month". (36)

Early in July a purchase of some extra land was made by Marcellin.(37) Knowing that after October many Brothers would have to return to the schools for the winter, Marcellin asked to be relieved of parish duties. We know from what has been written of this building project by those who were there or who later spoke to others there, that Marcellin was regarded with awe by the young Brothers for the amount of work he did: always, as both Brs. Jean-Baptiste and Laurent insist, doing the most difficult work available.(38) Yet, each evening, he still had the energy to give them

35. FMS Archives, Cahier No. 8 (Rome). We might also note that when the Mayor of St. Chamond wrote to the Rector of the Lyons Academy in May 1831 he stated, "There is no primary school attached to the Hermitage". (Archives générales des pères maristes, Rome, 918 Saint-Chamond.)

36. FMS Archives, Cahier 8. (Rome).

37. 3rd July 1824: Bought from Mr. Thiolliere by Fathers Champagnat and Courveille in the office of Mr. Finaz for 500 francs: 1. a section of rocks containing 15 ares 20 ca; 2. a wood of about 41 ares 80 ca in the territory known as Chez Coulaud. (1 are = 100 sq. metres: 1 ca = 1 sq. metre. "ca" is abbreviation used for "centiare") (Annales de l'Hermitage, St. Chamond).

38. Br. Laurent, op. cit., p. 4.

instructions in the religious life and on their teaching.(39) His weekend duties in the Lavalla parish, he thought, were losing him too much time that he felt he needed with his Brothers. So he asked to be relieved of the parish work, and his request was granted by the diocesan authorities. Champagnat's name appears in the Lavalla parish register for the last time in October of this year.

Yet, in spite of the hectic building programme in this year of 1824, Marcellin founded two more schools: at Charlieu and at Chavanay. The Archbishop himself had made the request to Marcellin to open a school at Charlieu.(40) It is revealing to examine the documents relating to this founding at Charlieu and to see how Courveille was giving the impression that he was the only superior of the Brothers with whom people had to deal and, worse, that he requested the establishment of a Brothers' novitiate at Charlieu, something that would have operated counter to Champagnat's foundation at the Hermitage. Charlieu, a proud town with a history going back to Roman times, was quite distant from Lavalla so Champagnat, busy with building, asked Courveille to organise the foundation of this school.

Vicar-General Cholleton wrote to Mr. Ducoing, Mayor of Charlieu:

"I have it in writing from Lavalla that the three Brothers you seek for the school at Charlieu will be able to leave next week. If you wish to house them in the seminary, see Father Crétin; we will inform the Brothers from here when we have your reply."(41)

A month later, when Mayor Ducoing was addressing his council, he said:

"I replied at once, telling Cholleton that Father Crétin had received no instructions on the matter. The council had granted 300 francs for the teacher Grizard during 1824; (42) that it had voted 400 francs for 1825 ... My letter had not reached him

39. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 151.

40. Ibid, p. 155.

41. "Fondations d'écoles en 1818-1826:", Registre des DÉLIBÉRATIONS du Conseil de Charlieu, Archives de Département de la Loire, IT - 14. Br. Jean-Baptiste in his reference to this foundation mistakenly refers to a certain Guinat, whereas his actual name was Ducoing (Mayor).

42. This was the same Grizard mentioned earlier - formerly with the De La Salles, then with Bochard's Brothers of the Cross of Jesus.

before three Brothers arrived with Father Courveille, the founder of this congregation, at my place and asked if everything was ready for them.(43) I showed my surprise at their arrival, and informed them of my correspondence with Fr. Cholleton. Father Courveille then told me that he could not allow his Little Brothers to remain with so low a salary from the town,(44) that he was annoyed at having made this expensive journey, that he would go back with his Brothers and, if later on the town wanted them, it might not be possible to supply them.

He gave me a Prospectus for their establishment in a town... I pointed out that we had no lodging for his Brothers, nor was there any chance of finding a suitable place in the town, but that the seminary of Lyons owned buildings and gardens that would suit them admirably,...as to the salary, the town might obtain an increase from well-to-do people,...I presumed that the Brother Director of the School would take on the task of collecting this fee....I warned him that some 25-30 children of indigent parents would be admitted free of charge...

He replied that he would ask 600 fr. per year for the upkeep of the school, payable in advance; for furniture and other items...a sum of 1,000 fr. to be paid only once,...

Since then, ... - always zealous for the best - we borrowed 1,000 fr. to set up their place, with the result that the school was opened; to the great satisfaction of the parents and to public edification." (45)

43. It is doubtful if the Brothers had ever heard Courveille referred to as their Superior, let alone their Founder. In the only two extant writings of this period by Brothers then present - Brs. Laurent and Jean-Baptiste, Laurent doesn't mention Courveille's name once, whilst Jean-Baptiste registers nothing but contempt for Courveille's efforts to have the Brothers elect him as their Superior the following year, 1825.

44. Even Champagnat would have provided but two Brothers for the 400 francs.

45. Extrait de "Registre des Délibérations du Conseil de Charlieu", Fondations d'écoles en 1818-1826, Archives de Département de la Loire, IT - 14.

He then mentioned that Fr. Courveille was also keen to establish in their town a novitiate for the Little Brothers of Mary,(46) plus a centre for missionary priests who would be available to assist various parish priests who might need them.(47) After mentioning that Courveille also required money from the Municipal Council for his "priests' centre" he went on to remind them how on 12th April 1824 they had allotted 300 francs to the primary-school teacher Grizard, but:

"Grizard closed the school and disappeared at the end of June or early July... Grizard, on leaving, took possession of and sold the furniture, a great part of which had been supplied through an appeal made in the region; now the people of Charlieu who gave to this appeal, did not give it to Grizard, but to the establishment and the school. He has therefore got away with what does not belong to him".

The mayor then suggested that they retain the 150 francs put aside for Grizard and give this, plus a further 150 francs, to Brother Louis Audras - who would be the Director of the Marist Brothers' School:

"...in order to help the establishment which seems to be going in a manner so favourable and so advantageous for this town."(48)

The town councillors deliberated the matter on 26th November and then passed these resolutions:

1. The primary school for boys at Charlieu be given to the Little Brothers of Mary, of St. Mary of the Hermitage, under the direction of the one appointed by Father Courveille, Founder of this Congregation.(49)

46. It seems certain that Courveille would have been making this request without having gained such approval from Marcellin Champagnat. Marcellin, fully engaged in the erection of the Hermitage, could not have been thinking of another Novitiate elsewhere.

47. No doubt Courveille meant this to eventually become a site for the Marist Fathers; but again, it seems he was doing this with little or no regard for the work of Father Colin along these lines in these same years.

48. Extrait de "Registre des Délibérations de Conseil de Charlieu", Foundations d'écoles en 1818-1826, Archives de Département de la Loire, TT - 14.

49. This, of course, is a blatant falsehood. Although Courveille might regard himself correctly as the Founder of the originally proposed Marist Society, only one man - Marcellin Champagnat - could claim to have been the founder of the Brothers.

2. *There will be admitted to the school 25 - 30 children from indigent families.*
3. *In the event of Father Courveille establishing a novitiate in the seminary buildings..., the town will pay over four years an annual sum of 400 francs.*
4. *That the sum of 300 fr. allotted to teacher Grizard for 1824, ... to be paid on 1st January next to Brother Louis Audres..."(50)*

The Diocesan authorities had originally asked Fr. Champagnat for the above school at Charlieu. Champagnat, busily engaged with building the Hermitage, entrusted the final details to Courveille. Courveille was to cause great difficulties for Marcellin's Institute in 1825 and, worse, in 1826: yet we have noticed above that even in 1824 he is inclined to meddle awkwardly in the Institute's affairs. For instance, his request for a novitiate at Charlieu was obviously 'out-of-place'.(51) No wonder the early Brothers had often exclaimed, "*Thank God for Champagnat!*" for, whilst Courveille was an unsettling influence at Charlieu, in the narrow valley of Les Gauds, thanks to the vigour of Marcellin, Notre Dame de l'Hermitage (Our Lady of the Hermitage) was successfully being built as the headquarters of the Brothers. It is significant that the only item of Courveille's plans that became a reality was the primary school for which Marcellin had been able to provide three Brothers. Yes, the only real expansion work was being done by this versatile, sturdy young priest, for whom the Brothers had such high regard and who seemed never-tiring in his continuous work for their benefit. Br. Jean-Baptiste has written that, at Charlieu, the Brothers found the children in a deplorable state of ignorance. For a time, the Brothers' task was extremely difficult, but success was eventually attained and this school became one of the most flourishing of the congregation.(52)

50. One year previously, Courveille had had a small group of Brothers that he himself had founded, at Feurs. However, Bochart had absorbed this group into his own Brothers of the Cross of Jesus. Hence, it is of some interest to note that in this year of 1824 their positions are reversed, because Grizard had originally been a member of Bochart's group.

51. Courveille had wanted, in addition to a primary school, a novitiate and also a residence for Marist Priests. This unfortunate aptitude to meddle in other people's affairs is also well illustrated by Courveille's request around this time, to Verrières' Superior, that the Association of the Holy Family at the seminary of Verrières become, instead, the Third Order of the Society of Mary. (Archevêché de Lyon, No. 12. Lettre datée du 14 juin 1824 de l'abbé Méret à un vicaire général.)

52. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 156.

Also this November two Brothers were sent to open a school at Chavanay. Father Gauché had been waiting two years since his first request had been waived by Champagnat because of Bochard (as related above). A deputation of the principal men of the place was sent to the Hermitage, in a carriage, to accompany the Brothers to the parish.(53) This school had the whole-hearted support of the entire parish and was attended, from the beginning, by all the children of school age.(54)

Some of the Brothers lived with Marcellin so as to help with the building during this winter. The interior work was virtually finished during this period.(55) Two more of the adjacent sections of land were bought by Marcellin, one lot in October (56) and the other in February.(57) Marcellin was able to devote his full time to his congregation of Brothers, of course, after he was released from his duties as curate at Lavalla in October of this year.(58) It was now a rush against time to try and get the unfinished Hermitage building habitable before winter set in. As Brother Avit later wrote:

"With much hard work the roofing was laid on the Hermitage building before the severe weather set in. The walls are too thin: the mortar between the stones is insufficient to support such a tall building. The southerly winds, often violent in the gorge, have tried them

53. Their purpose, in conveying the Brothers in a carriage to their home town, was to impress both the Brothers and the local parishioners with the importance the Town Council attached to this event.

54. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 156.

55. Ibid, p. 156.

56. 4th October 1824: Bought from Mr. Thouilly by Fathers Champagnat and Courveille in the office of Mr. Finaz, price 100 fr.: a parcel of sloping woods of an area of about 6 ares in the place Chez Coulaud. (Annales de l'Hermitage).

57. 14th February 1825: Bought from Bertholen by Fathers Champagnat and Courveille in the office...1,000 fr., at the Hermitage, Les Gauds: 1. a field called Field of the Gier, Chez Coulaud, and called Rocks of the Woods. (Ibid.)

N.B. Les Gauds is the hamlet on the other side of the river to Chez Coulaud.

58. He signed the parish register at Lavalla, for the last time, on 15th October 1824. (Registre de la paroisse de Lavalla). Nevertheless it was not until 20th March 1825 - that his successor first signed the Register. Again, on 21st February 1825 a receipt for 22 fr. gives Fr. Champagnat the title of "Vicaire" (curate). (This receipt is in FMS Archives, Rome, "Père Champagnat": Cahier 3, p. 10.).

severely at times; but the Good Mother is there, and her devoted servant had counted on her."(59)

After getting the building of the Hermitage under way, Marcellin set himself to do his utmost to obtain legal authorisation for his Institute's schools; something that would be essential for the long term existence of his Institute. On 15th January 1825, a Saturday, the Statutes of the new congregation were drawn up at the Hermitage. No doubt Courveille and perhaps Vicar-General Cholleton had some part, along with Marcellin himself, in framing the text. However, we do know that Marcellin was later to modify them. It is probable that Marcellin personally submitted this text to Father Gardette, his advisor, in the course of his journey to Lyons.(60) They would then have been presented to Archbishop de Pins who would himself have undertaken the negotiations with the government of Charlex X. Nothing had previously been written until very recent years when the relevant documents were discovered in the Diocesan Archives. The file begins with a letter addressed to Bishop Frayssinous, Grandmaster of the University.(61).

59. Br. Avit, op. cit., p. 60.

There were no stone walls of any kind to keep the Gier to its bed; these had to be built later "several hundred metres long which joined the old dam on the Gier where the canal brought the water into the workshop of Mr. Patouillard." (Ibid, p. 56).

60. According to Br. Avit, Fr. Champagnat returned to the Hermitage, after this trip to Lyons, on 22nd January 1825. (Ibid. p. 41).

61. There has been a mistaken tradition in France that this man was responsible for the advancement of education during the "Restoration Period". He became Grandmaster of the University on 1st June 1822, but did not enter the Council of Ministers until 26th August 1824, by which time all the important decisions on education were already in the course of execution, notably the Bishops' seizure of primary education and the government's authorisation of eight new congregations of religious teaching Brothers. (P. Zind, "Les Nouvelles Congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830", Lyons, 1969, p. 226.).

*The Hermitage of Our Lady,
near St. Chamond. Loire.
15th January 1825.*

Sir,

A new congregation established in the diocese of Lyons near St. Chamond, Loire, known under the name of the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary, has the honour to present to your Excellency its Statutes, and to beg you kindly to obtain from his Majesty the authorisation that is necessary for it.

The Brothers of this Congregation, seeking nothing but the good of society, dare to hope, Sir, that your Excellency will not refuse to protect them, and that his Majesty who lived only for the good of his subjects; will not refuse their request.

In this hope, the Little Brothers of Mary have the honour to call themselves,

Your very humble and obedient servants. (62)

Then follow the Statutes preceded by a preamble:

"A christian and religious education is the quickest and surest means to ensure good subjects for society, and fervent Christians for the church. Unfortunately this means is not available in most rural areas.

62. Archives de l'Archevêché de Lyon.

This draft carries no signatures.

Pierre Zind wrote in 1956 that, except for these documents which had been ignored for so long, nothing else concerning these specific negotiations of 1825 have come down to us. (P. Zind, "Contribution à une reprise...", Bulletin, No. 162, April 1956, p. 162).

Fr. Coste points out that Pierre Zind erred in the above article when he wrote that the letter would have been addressed to the Minister of the Interior, for by Ordinance of 26th August 1824 all such matters had to go to the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and of Public Instruction. (Coste & Lessard, op. cit., Vol. 1, note to Document 129, p. 361.).

Insufficiency of municipal resources and the poverty of the people do not permit of education being entrusted to the De La Salle Brothers, whose quality and capacity are known to everyone. From this arises the sad necessity of allowing children to grow up in woeful ignorance, or, which is perhaps worse, to hand them over to mercenary teachers quite incapable of forming them to the virtues necessary for them. Aroused by these considerations, some pious people (63) have formed in the diocese of Lyons a new congregation known under the name of Little Brothers of Mary. The Brothers of this congregation devote themselves entirely to primary education. Their first endeavours have been so blessed that it is quite to be expected of this congregation the greatest advantages for the education of the poorer classes especially, if his Majesty, who desires nothing but the good of his subjects, will deign to authorise them. To obtain this favour, the Little Brothers of Mary have drawn up the Statutes of their Institute:

ARTICLE 1: The Little Brothers of Mary have as their aim primary instruction; they teach reading, writing, arithmetic, the principles of French Grammar, church music, sacred history. They follow in their teaching the method of the De La Salle Brothers: they teach without salary and arrange with the town as to means for procuring a respectable and inexpensive living.

ARTICLE 2: After a novitiate of two years, if they are over 18 years of age, they take simple vows, from which they can be dispensed.

ARTICLE 3: If a Brother leaves the congregation, or if he is sent away, whatever he brought will be restored to him, less any unusual expenses he may have incurred. The Brothers may not dispose of any goods by gift as between living persons or by will, except in conformity with the laws of the State relative to religious congregations."(64)

63. i.e. Champagnat and Courveille.

64. "Registre des Délibérations du Conseil Archiépisopal de Lyon (1824-1827)", Archives de l'Archevêché de Lyon.

Then follow four further articles relating to the internal administration of the congregation. In the text there is no mention of either Courveille or Champagnat. The letter was presented as the spontaneous request of the Brothers, of whom fourteen signed it.(65)

Without any restriction or modification, the Royal Council of Public Instruction approved these statutes on 10th May 1825 and decided to solicit an ordinance of authorisation.(66) Charlex X entrusted the affair to the Council of State which on 20th July 1825 turned down this request for authorisation with the following remarks.

1. *In Article 2 the word "agreement" must be substituted for the word "vow".*
2. *In Article 3 there must be the suppression of the section concerning disposal of goods because (a) there were no laws governing these matters for religious congregations. The law of 24th May 1825 applied only to religious communities of women." (67)*

Although Pierre Zind has written, "*It is an inexplicable stoppage, for the suggested alterations concerned no vexatious matter*",(68) a closer examination of the politics of the time helps our understanding of the Council of State's decision. Firstly, although in the years 1822 and 1823 the government had been fully in favour of religious schools, a reaction occurred and on 1st January 1825 a law was passed limiting the facilities allowable for the authorisation of religious educators. A further law of 24th May 1825 rendered the matter easier for female congregations, but had now made it even more difficult for male congregations.

65. The list of signatures which accompanied these Statutes were obliterated in January 1828. Probably Courveille's name appeared first. The handwriting on the document is certainly not that of Father Champagnat.

66. This was done on the urging of Clausef de Coussergues. (Archives Nationales de France: A. N. F71 - 12453.)

67. Alfred de Cilleuls, Histoire de l'Enseignement Libre dans l'ordre primaire, Paris, 1898, p. 359. He adds that after more than a hundred hours of searching in the National Archives of France he failed to find the original with the exact text.

68. P. Zind, Les Nouvelles..., p. 319.

A further consideration is that Courveille had redated the actual application form, altering it from 15th January 1825 to 19th July 1824. (Thus, he hoped, it would avoid obstruction by the new law of 1st January 1825). However, the fact that Cholleton actually signed this document seems to indicate that he, who had contact with people of influence in these matters, thought the application would be satisfactory. (Cholleton, on 4th October 1824, had been assigned the task of pursuing legal authorisation for those communities in the diocese which had not yet obtained it.)

From my study of this event, I consider that the crucial item blocking legal authorisation was the refusal of Champagnat to alter the engagement of "vows" for the members of his institute. At this time, the Council of State had directions not to accept too easily a congregation in which vows were made. Archbishop de Pins had already granted Marcellin's request that his Brothers could take vows, (69) and in Marcellin's mind the taking of vows held priority over legal authorisation.(70). It is of interest to note that between 23rd June 1820 and 16th November 1825, ten institutes of Brothers received authorisation, but all as "charitable associations" and without any recognition of vows. Marcellin must have been pressed by some people, surely, to do away with the vows; but his firm stand on this matter may have saved his institute from an early 'death'. For instance, his firm stand made possible, it seems, the union in 1842 and 1844 of the Brothers of Christian Instruction in the dioceses of Valence and Viviers with the Marist Brothers.(71) Perhaps Br. Jean-Baptiste was correct

69. Br. Avit, op. cit., p. 36.

70. Champagnat was reported as saying, "To persevere in religion, one must come entirely, and not be satisfied with putting only one foot into the monastery, like those who come only to look around them, to make a trial ..." (Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Tome Second, p. 154.

71. This union brought legal authorisation with it, the only remaining condition was that each Marist Brother must obtain the Brevet.

when he wrote of the Brothers of Viviers - who had gained government authorisation 10th November 1825, "*After finishing their novitiate, ... they gradually lost their first fervour; their inconstancy of will which the vows alone could strengthen, grew too weak to retain them in their vocation ...*"(72)

The government's refusal to grant authorisation was an especially serious matter since Marcellin's institute then consisted of 24 Brothers teaching about 1,300 children in eleven schools; whilst there were an additional twenty Brothers and ten Postulants (73) living at the Hermitage.(74) A recent discovery by P. Zind in the French National Archives supplies us with the first official statistics of the Institute and it is dated December 1824. It lists:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>LOCATION OF SCHOOL</u>	<u>TEACHERS</u>	<u>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</u>
1816	Lavalla	2 Brothers	80
1818	Marlhes	2 Brothers	100
1819	Le Bessat	1 Catcehicist	30
1820	St. Sauveur	2 Brothers	100
1821	Tarentaise	2 Brothers	60
1822	Bourg-Argental	3 Brothers	200
1823	Vanosc	2 Brothers	80
1823	St. Symphorien	3 Brothers	150
1823	Boulieu	3 Brothers	120
1824	Chavanay	2 Brothers	100
1824	Charlieu	3 Brothers	200 (75)

During the month of May, 1825, the community at Lavalla took up their residence at the Hermitage. This community numbered 20 Brothers and 10 Postulants. (On 29th March previous to this there had occurred the first decease of a member of Marcellin's Institute, this member being Brother Jean-Pierre Martinol.) (76) Fr. Dervieux, Parish Priest of St. Chamond, assisted by Parish Priests Farge of Izieux and Bedoin

72. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 310.

73. A postulant is a person who has just commenced living the religious life of an institute. After a prescribed period of time he may, if he wishes, commence his novitiate.

74. Bulletin de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie, Vol. 2, p. 702.

75. Archives Nationales de France: F17 - 12453.

76. Bulletin, Vol. II, p. 702.

of Lavalla (77) came and blessed the Chapel at the Hermitage on 13th August of this year. This, as it happened, was really the third chapel that had been constructed at the Hermitage. We mentioned above that the first chapel was the rather primitive construction erected within the nearby trees during the early construction work. It was followed by another chapel which was made on the first floor of the southern wing, but this served as the Brothers' chapel for three months only.(78)

There now commenced a most complex and unhappy period for those living at the Hermitage. To begin with, the Council of Archbishop de Pins invited, on 25th August, Fr. Terraillon to go to the Hermitage for the religious instruction of the "Little Brothers of Mary".(79) Terraillon, as might be remembered, was one of the original group of seminarians who had pledged their lives to the founding of a "Society of Mary". Reluctantly, it seems, he eventually had gone to the Hermitage for he wrote to his friend Father Colin on 31st October, "...if it were within my power, you would see me arriving as soon as possible in your little valley" - this being Cerdon, where Colin was still endeavouring to found the Marist Fathers' branch of the Society of Mary.

It is of interest to note that the same Diocesan Council Meeting of 25th August also sent a message to Father Courveille telling him to confine himself to the work of the Brothers. Apparently his concurrent efforts of directing the Marist Sisters and endeavouring to found a Marist Third Order (80) were something that many in the Diocese were finding excessive; and, being Courveille, he had probably antagonised certain people in the pursuit of his work. At any rate, Courveille apparently thought that if he was to confine himself to the Brothers, the least that should happen would be that he be recognised as their superior. Hence, during both September and October Courveille manoeuvred

77. Br. Avit, Annales de l'Hermitage, FMS Archives, Rome, p. 41.

Fr. Champagnat was certainly present, but it seems that Coureville was not. (Ibid).

78. Ibid.

79. Archives de l'archevêché de Lyon, "Decisions du Conseil de Mgr de Pins: envoi de M. Terraillon à l'Hermitage; avertissement à M. Courveille", 25 août 1825 - reg. delib. 5, p. 84.

80. Br. Avit, Annales, p. 44.

so as to have the Brothers choose him as their superior. At length, after gathering all the Brothers (this being holiday-time for those in the schools) he gave them a long address, concluding "*It is necessary that you choose one of the Fathers here to direct you (i.e. Terrailon, Courveille or Champagnat). I am ready to sacrifice myself for you*".(81) The Brothers were then asked to write the name of the superior they desired, each on a slip of paper. Courveille collected the paper slips and, in an obviously disappointed tone, announced that on practically every ballot paper there appeared the name of Champagnat. Undoubtedly, Marcellin must have been overjoyed, but nevertheless he probably felt some sadness at the thought that neither Courveille nor Terrailon had ever been really accepted by the Brothers.(82)

In November, when Marcellin was making his visitation of the Marist schools, back at the Hermitage both Terrailon and Courveille expressed their disapproval to the Brothers of their practice, even in Champagnat's absence, of still speaking of him as their superior. Perhaps Courveille, who had been the originator of the Marist project back in seminary days, was feeling some jealousy towards Marcellin. We will never know his internal thoughts at this time, but he will soon be guilty of most unbecoming actions. He, probably more than anyone else, will be responsible for the tragic events of 1826.

Towards the end of 1825, with Champagnat absent, Courveille apparently thought that he was, at least temporarily, their true superior. To display this fact he dressed himself in a rather ornate long blue cloak,(83) took on all the airs of an abbot, and passed himself off as the superior at every opportunity.(84) He wrote to all the Brothers in

81. Coste & Lessard, *Origines Maristes*, Vol. IV, p.255.

82. In fact, Br. Jean-Baptiste wrote that Marcellin told the Brothers that he thought they had not pondered the matter with sufficient thought. He then called for another election: but once again Marcellin received virtually all the votes.(Br.Jean-Baptiste, *VIE*, Vol. 1, p. 160).

Undismayed by this rejection, Courveille suggested to Champagnat and Terrailon that the three of them elect a superior for the three priests; but as "this proposition seemed uncalled for", Courveille's rank as superior never became definitive.

83. We should note that Father Champagnat never wore the blue cloak.

84. Br. Avit, *Abrégé ...*, p. 48.

the schools and bitterly reproached them for their continuance in regarding Champagnat as their superior even while he was travelling outside the Hermitage. He also informed them that he had composed a book of rules which he wanted read in all of the communities.(85)

Champagnat was soon to hear of Courveille's intrigues and such news greatly saddened him. However, before treating with the distressing aftermath of this sad affair, let us examine more closely the current life of Marcellin. A workman who accompanied Champagnat for part of his journeying has left us with the following breath-taking account. Let us also remember that this area of France was stricken with very bad weather for most of November and early December that year.

The institute then had ten establishments,(86) and Champagnat visited them all, nearly always on foot. The workman tells us that on this occasion Marcellin took a conveyance at St. Etienne at nine o'clock one night, got to Roanne at eight next morning, said Mass, and proceeded on foot to Charlieu without breaking his fast.(87) He left Charlieu at four o'clock next morning, and after walking about sixteen kilometres he reached Roanne where he said Mass. After taking a little soup he set off for Ventranges, ten kilometres distant. After a meal at Ventranges he walked a further ten kilometres before reaching Balbigny in the evening. There he slept at the presbytery, but started again at four o'clock next morning, walked about sixteen kilometres before saying Mass, (88) after which he immediately continued his journey to La Fouillouse, where he took some soup and fruit; but he did not stop again until he arrived back at the Hermitage at about seven o'clock in the evening.(89) He would often walk several hours before seeking even a drink of water. This workman declared, "*Several times I was tempted to leave him, and to enter an inn to get something to eat*".(90)

85. Br. Jean-Baptiste tells us that the Brothers felt his rule did not suit their way of life. He added, in 1868, "nothing remained of this rule which was only a lot of fine theory". (P. Zind, "Contribution à une reprise des travaux historiques sur les origines des petits frères de Marie", Bulletin, Tome XXII, No. 162, avril 1956, p. 166).

86. Including a new one at Ampuis.

87. In those days no Catholic could attend Mass and receive Communion unless such person had abstained from both food and drink since the midnight previous.

88. Probably at Feurs, but no location is cited in the VIE.

89. The Hermitage was nearly 20 kilometres from Fouillouse,

90. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, pp. 161, 162.

Since Champagnat's stay at the Hermitage would also be very brief, because he would generally leave the next day to visit another school, it is not surprising that he soon wore out his strong constitution.

It is also to be noted that one of Marcellin's major tasks during this current journeying was his foundation of a new Marist Brothers' school at Ampuis. This town is near Vienne on the Rhône, and the new school there was provided with three Brothers for its 150 pupils.(91) A further worry on his mind was the bad financial state of his congregation. As the year 1825 had progressed, the institute's financial position went from bad to worse. For instance, it had been impossible to pay Mr. Montellier his 5,000 francs on 13th May for the first purchase of land. Luckily this man, after hearing of Marcellin's financial troubles, agreed to accept only 2,000 francs at that stage, but it was obvious to Marcellin that loans must be negotiated for the immediate future. The largest of these was finalised on 13th December when Marcellin, briefly interrupting his visitation of the schools, went with Courveille to Lyons where they arranged a loan of 12,000 francs. They agreed to repay the loan, plus 4% interest, in four years. Their security was "all the property they possessed called the Hermitage of Our Lady, vast buildings, gardens, farms, woods and a water-canal..." (92)

However, it seems that Marcellin's greatest trial at this time was the news he received that Courveille was becoming more and more unacceptable to the Brothers. It is not surprising that on 26th December, a Monday, shortly after his return from his strenuous journeyings, he became seriously ill and had to confine himself to his bed. Nevertheless his malady worsened and a few days later it was feared he was about to die. Courveille, whether out of goodwill or fear that Champagnat's death would leave him with all the Institute's debts we know not, but on 3rd January

91. Br. Avit, Abrégé..., pp. 43, 44.

92. "13 décembre 1825 - Emprunt de douze mille francs par MM. Champagnat et Courveille à Mme Justine de Divonne devant Me Lecourt à Lyon", Titres de propriété: l'Hermitage, FMS Archives, Rome. Actually, Mr. Rusand, the diocesan bookseller in Lyons went surety for them - probably at the request of Vicar-General Barou.

Courveille sent a circular to all the Brothers asking for prayers for Marcellin's recovery.(93) However, the Brothers must have found it unfortunate that he put letters after his name signifying that he was their real superior. His circular read as follows:

*+All for the greater glory of God, M.G.D.J.H. (94)
From Our Lady of the Hermitage. 3rd January 1826.
Our very dear children in Jesus and Mary,*

*It is
with sorrow and regret that we write to you to
ask you to pray earnestly to the Father of mercies
and to our august Mother, the divine Mary, (95)
for our dear and well-beloved son, Father Champagnat,
your very dear and venerable father-director who
is dangerously ill.*

*I beg of you, my very dear
children, to join us in praying urgently to the
Divine Jesus and to the divine Mary, our Mother,
to preserve for us a son who is so dear to us,
and for you a father who should be no less dear
to you. Beg the parish priest kindly to pray
for him and to recommend him to the prayers of
the faithful.*

*Receive the assurance of
the paternal tenderness with which I have the
honour to be,
Your entirely devoted father and entirely yours,
in Christ Jesus and Mary.*

J.C. Courveille f.D. & S.p.g.m.t. (96)

93. "3 janvier 1826. - Circulaire de M. Courveille aux petits frères de Marie", lettres Courveille, FMS Archives, Rome. Br. Jean-Baptiste in his VIE (p. 174) gives credit to Courveille for this circular; but P. Zind ("Contribution a une reprise des travaux Historiques sur les origines des petits freres de Marie", Bulletin, No. 162 avril 1956, p. 168) considers the financial concern was paramount. The documents suggest that Zind is probably correct.

94. M.G.D.J.H. = All for the greater glory of God and the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus. (Majorem Dei Gloriam et Mariae Genetricis Domini Jesu Honorem). Courveille had put this on the head of his promise of 23rd July 1816 at Fourvière and it is found on many other letters of Courveille.

95. The word "divine" before Mary is unfortunate, since the Catholic Church has never regarded Mary as being divine. The actual words Courveille used were: "... et notre auguste Mère, la divine Marie, ...".

96. It seems that he meant: f(on)D(ateur) et S(u)P(erieur g(énéral) m(aris)t(e) - at least, this is the opinion of Father Coste S.M. who has made a serious study of all Courveille's letters. (Coste & Lessard, O.M.,

Naturally, when news of Champagnat's serious illness became known elsewhere, his financial creditors became alarmed and they demanded immediate repayment of their money. Foreseeing the worst, Marcellin decided that he must make his Will. This was done on 6th January, (97) but since all he could pass on were his debts, he had first to find someone who would be willing to accept them. Some years later (in 1833) he wrote the following most moving account in one of his letters:

"During a long and serious illness, when heavy debts hung over my head, I wished to make Fr. Terrailon my sole heir. He refused my inheritance saying that I had nothing. He did not cease with Fr. Courveille to say to the Brothers: 'the creditors will come very soon to drive you out of here; we will move off to a parish and leave you to yourselves' ". (98)

Since Fr. Terrailon had refused, help had to be found elsewhere. Luckily, a day or two earlier, Brother Stanislaus had, it seems, gone to the archbishop (99) who immediately arranged for Fr. Dervieux (Parish Priest of St. Peter's) and Fr. Joseph Verrier (Professor at Verrières) to act. Dervieux did not hesitate to take upon himself the debts of Fr. Champagnat. (100) Fr. Verrier, now Superior of the Seminary and who had previously been a seminary friend of Marcellin, on hearing of Terrailon's refusal to help, rushed to

97. This was also the Feast of the Epiphany in the Catholic Church, a day of special significance for Marcellin since on this day, in his seminary years, he had been admitted to Minor orders and the ~~Sub~~-Diaconate.

98. "Lettres de M. Champagnat", FMS Archives, Rome, lettre à Vicaire Général (Cholleton): A CCH 3bis p.11-13; SI.49: (Lettre No. 32): été ... 1833.

This is the copy of a letter to the Vicar-General. The text is probably the most moving that we possess in Marcellin's own handwriting. It seems that he may have cried as he wrote since, in the photocopy, there are marks that seem to indicate possible tear-stains that may have occurred during the original writing of this letter.

99. Br. Jean-Baptiste says Br. Stanislaus himself contacted Dervieux. However, it seems more likely that he went to the archbishop (as he was really now the patron of the institute and regarded it more or less as diocesan). It seems Verrier was chosen to safeguard matters for the archdiocese. It might also be noted that the Parish Priest of Izieux put in money to help at this stage. ("Bilan de l'Hermitage au 7 août 1826" Archives de l'Hermitage, St. Chamond).

100. Br. Avit, Annales, p. 45.

the aid of the Little Brothers of Mary.(101) He offered to stand in. Thus, on the 6th January, Marcellin dictated his Will as follows:

*"In the presence of Mr. Finaz, notary royal,...
and in the presence of the 4 witnesses hereinunder
appointed, in person, Marcellin Champagnat,
priest, living at the Hermitage....
indisposed in body, but in full possession
of his senses, dictates his Will to us:
I leave it, for my funeral and suffrages,
to the honour, religion and attachment of my heirs...
I name and appoint as my sole heirs Jean-Claude
Courveille, priest ... and Joseph Verrier, priest,
... all my goods of whatever nature... I revoke
all previous Wills.*

*Such is the Will of the Testator, written
without interference of the undermentioned
witnesses ... achieved at the foot of the bed ...
6th January, in the afternoon, 1826, in presence
of Antoine Desgrange, servant Brother at the
Charity Hospice, St. Chamond; Matthew Patouillard,
fuller and landowner, Les Gauds, Izieux; Jean-
Pierre Lespinasse, tailor, Les Gauds, Izieux;
and Robert, L'ayat, Izieux. All four are
witnesses with us, not the Testator, nor the
two last witnesses, Lespinasse and Robert who
have declared they do not know how to sign. Father
Champagnat, Testator, being unable to sign by
reason of his great weakness ...*

*Signed: Patouillard, Desgrange, and
Finaz - this last one Notary." (102)*

101. Document 148: "6 janvier 1826 - Testament de Marcellin Champagnat". D'après la minute conservée dans le fonds de M; Finaz en l'étude de M. Cartier à St. Chamond. (Coste & Lessard, *Origines Maristes*, Vol. 1, p.386)
102. Document 148, *Origines Maristes*, Vol. 1, pp. 385-386.

No law forbade other members of the Hermitage community to be witnesses (besides Courveille), but it was judged more prudent to use outsiders for this task. Izieux is a small town adjacent to St.Chamond.

Br. Jean-Baptiste is, no doubt, correct when he wrote in his VIE that Champagnat's grave illness brought about a great disturbance in the spirits and morale of all members of the congregation.(103) He mentioned that they all felt certain "that if Father Champagnat had died, all was lost." It is obvious that the severely weakened Champagnat was also aware of this fact: he was convinced that his cure was essential for the future life of the Brothers. We are able to read in one of his later letters:

"At last, God in his mercy, alas perhaps in his justice, restored my health. I reassured my children; I told them to fear nothing, that I would share all their misfortune, sharing with them the last piece of bread. I saw in this occurrence that neither the one nor the other (104) had for my young people the sentiments of a father..." (105)

Unfortunately, his cure was not complete. Physically, Marcellin remained weakened; the fourteen years that remained of his life, difficult years in which obstacles constantly harassed his work of consolidating his institute, would be years marked more or less by illness. On 29th January Marcellin went to spend his convalescence at the presbytery of Fr. Dervieux at St. Chamond. The latter had just paid more than 6,000 francs (106) to offset some of Marcellin's debts.(107) On the other hand, it is with utter amazement that we read that on 14th February Fathers Champagnat and Courveille bought, for cash, at 1,000 francs:

*"1. a field called Gier field, 19 ares,
2. all the rights that the sellers have to a property of woods, briars and rocks." (108)*

103. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, pp. 140-146.

104. i.e. Frs. Courveille and Terrailon.

105. FMS Archives, Rome, cahier titled "Renvois". The original is in the home of Mr. Cartier at St. Chamond.

106. Br. Sylvester, Memoires, Lyons, 1886-7, p. 114. (FMS Archives, Rome)

107. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 170.

108. "Titres de propriété - K - Hermitage", Archives de l'Hermitage, St. Chamond.

When such a thing could happen it certainly makes us better understand the constant criticisms of Champagnat by many of the clergy round about. Surely, from a purely human point of view, his conduct seemed foolish.

We know that Marcellin had tremendous faith, being fully convinced that what he was doing must be a work that God was really wanting him to do. He also believed that a strong devotion to Mary, whom he believed to be the mother of God, would safeguard his work. On the 15th March 1826 Champagnat asked the local authorities for permission to set up a mill at the Hermitage. Marcellin's plan was to raise some money by the spinning of silk. His request was approved (109) and he thanked God for this item which might not only help pay off the debts of the establishment but would provide useful work for many Brothers.(110) On top of this, on 1st May Father Petitain (Parish Priest of Ampuis) advanced 12,000 francs for Marcellin, the interest from which would serve for the upkeep of the parish school founded there the previous year.(111) As a result of all this, Mr. Montellier received the other 3,000 francs still owing to him from the Hermitage for the final payment of the land bought from him on 13th May 1824. (112)

However, financial problems were by no means the most serious difficulties in 1826. Undoubtedly the worst tribulations were those connected with Courveille. Perhaps the basic cause of these unfortunate events was Courveille's displeasure with the Brothers. One small event, early in the year, might be sufficient to show this. When Champagnat had returned to the Hermitage following his convalescence, he heard that Courveille intended to reprimand severely a young novice at a "Chapter

109. Archives de l'archevêché de Lyon: "Registre des Délibérations du Conseil de Mgr l'Evêque de Limoges, Administrateur Apostolique du diocèse de Lyon", cahier 1: 25 février 1824 - 7 mars 1827.

110. Nevertheless, the small sum spent on "setting it up" would indicate that it was not a large plant and that probably much of the gear was given, for by 1826 hand work was being replaced. (England had several types of "spinners" before 1800). Receipts show that as a source of income this venture was of small importance. The weaving of cloth continued much longer and brought in money, but again one of the lesser items of income.

111. FMS Archives, Rome: "Père Champagnat" - dossier 1 - cahier 2, p.3.

112. "Titres de propriété - K - Hermitage", Archives de l'Hermitage, St. Chamond.

of Faults" (113) which was about to take place. Though Marcellin could barely walk, he begged Brother Stanislaus to take him by the arm and help him to get to the Chapter-room. As soon as he entered, there was a transport of joy. Br. Jean-Baptiste later wrote, "*It is impossible to describe adequately the scene: all suddenly arose as one man, with happiness beaming on every countenance. All turned towards him and exclaimed: ' 'tis Father Champagnat! 'tis our good Father!' These exclamations of delight were immediately followed by loud and prolonged cheering and clapping of hands. Tears of joy stood in the eyes of nearly all present*". (114) The Chapter of Faults was suspended and Courveille, who had been presiding at the Chapter, left the room and never again attempted to organise any future "Chapter of Faults".

Marcellin addressed a few words of encouragement to the Brothers to help restore their confidence and dissipate their fears. He had heard of their difficult life under Courveille's direction. Courveille had imposed an exaggerated idealism on the young religious. He expected the young novices to follow blindly all his orders and these were so numerous and so restrictive of any kind of natural life that several Brothers complained. He refused to hear complaints and he seemed not the least sorry to see them abandon their vocation and return to the world. Marcellin, on his sick bed, had spoken to Courveille, begging him to be paternal and indulgent in his directions to the Brothers. He pleaded especially that Courveille should not be so hasty in turning away young novices; but all to no purpose. After some weeks of Courveille's harsh rule and constant complaints, even the senior Brothers were near rebellion. (115)

113. The "Chapter of Faults" was an exercise (since discontinued by the Marist Brothers) in which each member of the community would confess publicly his faults. This would be followed by any other member(s) telling this person of faults that he had not confessed. The Superior would then announce a penance for the person concerned. Such a Chapter used to be held weekly.

114. Br. Jean-Baptiste, *VIE*, Vol. 1, pp. 167, 168.

115. S. Hosie, *Anonymous Apostle*, New York, 1967, p. 112. This fact is not mentioned in any of the documents in the FMS Archives in Rome, but when Hosie was writing his book on Fr. Colin he had access to the files of the Marist Fathers and perhaps in some article (e.g. letter) of that period this matter was mentioned. Hosie, unfortunately, did not supply foot-notes.

Marcellin's entry into the room for the above "Chapter of Faults" was apparently the last-straw for Courveille. He now seems to have allowed his jealousy and inordinate ambition to take hold of him. He went to the Archbishop to complain against Champagnat.(116) It is obvious that Courveille wanted to discredit Marcellin and so have him forcibly removed from the Hermitage. In his words of complaint he mentioned that Marcellin was allowing unsuitable subjects to become members of his religious congregation. These had to be sent away but, in the meantime, they had been a great expense for the institute and their bad conduct had had a demoralising effect on the other Brothers. He then mentioned that Champagnat was not training his Brothers in piety nor in sufficient virtue. He added that the Brothers were employed inordinately at manual work when they would better have spent most of that time at prayer or study.(117) He complained that Marcellin was too indulgent towards the Brothers, hence discipline and regularity were very weak. Marcellin was unsuited to be a religious leader since he was too involved in the actual work of his institute and hence, according to Courveille, was not setting a high enough religious standard for his Brothers.

On receiving Courveille's letter of complaint, the Archbishop's councillors naturally thought that the whole matter must be investigated. For this purpose it was decided to send Fr. Cattet, Vicar-General recently appointed for religious communities, to the Hermitage to make an apostolic visitation. Cattet arrived at the Hermitage on 14th February. He listened coldly as Champagnat made a statement on conditions at the Hermitage.(118) Then, after asking Marcellin many questions, he set about to examine most minutely every room at the Hermitage.(119). This was followed by his subjecting both Brothers and Novices to an examination in religion and in the principal parts of primary instruction. He

116. In the Account Book for the Hermitage for 1826 (FMS Archives) Courveille had entered: 'February 25-28: for my journey to Lyons, 15 francs.' Since neither the Archdiocesan archives nor those at the Hermitage contain any written document of Courveille's complaints, it seems that he made the journey to Lyons to personally place his oral complaints before the archbishop.

117. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 171.

118. Br. Avit, Annales, p. 52.

119. Br. Avit, Abrégé..., p. 52.

was very severe and concluded that the Brothers were not sufficiently instructed. Br. Jean-Baptiste later wrote:

"It was quite plain to everyone that he was not satisfied and, moreover, he made no efforts to conceal it. He voiced his complaints aloud everywhere at what did not please him. Before leaving the Hermitage he repeated the reproaches he had already made to Father Champagnat in detail, as often as occasion had offered. He directed him to give more time to the instruction of the Brothers; forbade him to undertake any further buildings and insisted that he should devote himself less to material things." (120)

After returning to Lyons, Cattet planned to make Champagnat's Marist Brothers form a union with the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, an institute recently founded by Father Coindre.(121) The Marist Brothers were later to consider it fortunate that Coindre refused to follow Cattet's suggestion. By the end of April, even though the Archbishop remained concerned about the financial situation of the Hermitage, he gave up his support of Cattet's plan and the matter was soon put aside. Coindre died shortly afterwards (30th May) and Cattet again tried to bring about a union of the two institutes of Brothers, but the matter was finally laid to rest by the decision of the Archbishop's Council on 8th August 1826 opposing any such union.(122)

120. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, pp. 171, 172. This author then goes on to explain that since Champagnat's recruits had come from mountainous areas, they were illiterate and hence found it impossible to reach a good standard in one or two years only. Also the necessary repairs to the buildings were being delayed because of the lack of money to employ tradesmen. (Although admittedly, at least some tradesmen were constantly employed at the Hermitage). Marcellin normally did much of this work, but his recent sickness had exaggerated the situation. This same author, who had first-hand experience, said that Marcellin had done a splendid job in his forming the young men in virtue.

121. Fr. André Coindre had founded this Institute in 1817.

122. Archives de l'archevêché de Lyon, Reg. délib. 5, p. 132.

Marcellin, but partly recovered from his illness earlier in the year, must have found Cattet's inspection and report to the Archbishop a severe trial. He must also have realised that he and Courveille would, for the future, have great difficulty in working together, above all in their associations with the Brothers. It was about this time(123) that Courveille committed a homosexual act with one of the young postulants. Father Terraillon was the first to discover this moral lapse and he revealed it secretly to Father Barou, a Vicar-General. Fr. Terraillon later remarked, "*At that stage, Fr. Courveille was regarded everywhere as a saint, and so he really was.*"(124) Fr. Barou remarked, "*Put no faith in the virtue of men!*"

Naturally, it was thought best for Courveille to leave the Hermitage, so he went to the Cistercian abbey at Aiguebelle, 120 kms further south, for a few weeks. For Marcellin, who had for so many years regarded Courveille as the logical superior of the general society of Marists, that is, of priests, brothers and sisters, the whole world must have seemed upside-down. He himself had been the recipient of so many favours from Courveille,(125) and he had obviously welcomed Courveille's living at the Hermitage in its early days. Since Courveille was to play no further direct part in the history of the Marist Brothers, it is important, I think, to understand his true position before his departure.

Courveille had been the original leader of the group of seminarians who proposed the founding of a Society of Mary. After their ordination, when they formally dedicated their lives to Mary at Our Lady's Chapel at Fourvière, it was again Courveille who assumed leadership. Marcellin had obviously accepted Courveille as the future superior of the Marist Society and he was undoubtedly happy to have Courveille working with him as much as possible. We were astounded to learn that

123. From an examination of the Accounts book then at the Hermitage, this event occurred between 22nd April and 18th May. (FMS Archives, Rome).

124. P. Zind, "Contribution à une reprise des travaux historiques sur les origines des petits frères de Marie", Bulletin, Vol. XXII, No. 163, July 1956, p. 217.

125. For instance, for financial assistance in obtaining the first lodging for his Brothers at Lavalla.

Marcellin had founded his Marist Brothers just a few months after his ordination. Nevertheless, Courveille had also been working quickly. Whilst a curate at Rive-de-Gier in 1817-1818, Courveille persuaded some teachers with religious aspirations (126) to become Sisters of Mary there, whilst he was also doing a similar thing at St. Clair.(127) He spent the next 4½ years at Epercieux (Feurs) but kept in contact with his Sisters and also managed to obtain two Brothers to open a school at Feurs. He wrote to Rome for authorisation for his work and he signed himself as "Superior-General". From 12th May 1824 he worked with Champagnat, helped buy the Hermitage property and again acted as "Superior-General".(128)

However, it is of interest to learn that Father Colin (who was to found the Marist Fathers) had no intention at this time (1824) of considering Courveille as a Superior-General. The following letter, written by Colin on 10th May 1824, gives an account of his journey to Lyons to obtain permission for the Society of Mary:

"...After Father Recorbet V.G., I saw Fr. Barou V.G. ...he is all in favour of our work, but he would like the Marists to begin in conjunction with the Missioners of Chartreux, so as to form one body. I answered that I saw nothing to prevent this union in due course, but a start must be made with the Marists...Father Barou told me there was nothing to stop us from opening two houses at once - one in Belley and one in Lyons - that it was only a matter of appointing a superior-general who could be chosen by the two Bishops. I answered that we would be very flattered if our first superior-general were given to us by their Lordships." (129)

126. Fr. Lancelot (Parish Priest) had been helping them in their spiritual learnings.

127. When Courveille departed from Rive-de-Gier he caused division among these aspirants to religious life at St. Clair. He got his group to transfer from the Lyons diocese to the diocese of Grenoble across the Rhône.

128. For instance, he composed a set of Rules for the Brothers, adopted a distinctive costume for them, and then compiled a Prospectus. His method of founding the school at Charlieu is also indicative of his aspiration to be recognized as the highest superior.

129. Archives de l'évêché de Belley, carton Pères maristes: "10 mai 1824 - Lettre de Jean-Claude Colin à Mgr Devie".

Fr. Colin, contrary to Fr. Champagnat, had not really recognised Fr. Courveille as superior-general. The "first superior-general" in Colin's mind would be, he hoped, Fr. Cholleton the new Vicar-General. (130) Up until 1822 Colin, in all official letters for the Marist group, would add the name Courveille (131) since the Society of Mary, though still unofficial, was known at the Lyon's Chancery under Courveille's name. Apparently at some stage between 1822 and 1824 Colin discovered that Courveille's character was unsuited for good leadership. Fr. Stanley Hosie, himself a Marist Father, has summarised Courveille's character thus:

"...Gifted with unusual charm and a honeyed tongue, Courveille could have been almost anything he wanted to be if he had been persistent. He was not. Having begun the Society of Mary, he was content to leave the spadework to the Champagnats and the Colins. Courveille called them his 'agents' - the term was written down by an

130. S. Hosie, *Anonymous Apostle*, New York, 1967, p. 74.

131. Sometimes Colin would write Courveille's name himself. (Ibid, p. 68).

*inquisitive school inspector who questioned him
in 1823. (132)*

132. This was Inspector Poupar. He was checking on this school established by Courveille at Feurs because of the unfavourable report it had received from Inspector Guillard the previous year. Guillard's report included: "... This new school at Feurs was opened in February last by one Brother; a second arrived some five or six weeks ago; it is far from being the equal of those of the De La Salle Brothers; yet the very name of Brother has caused the collapse of two other schools in the town, though, to tell the truth, they were in very bad hands... (of the four teachers ruined by the Brothers)...two who were authorised to teach failed in their religious duties, the third practised at the same time as a hairdresser, while the fourth had gone through, by gambling, a fortune of 50,000 francs....It is perhaps to be regretted that this town has not been inspected more often. It seems clear to me that the clergy of the area want, more so than elsewhere, to busy themselves personally with every phase of education, and to consider as ungodly whatever concerns the University - of which they have very little knowledge...The regulations I read posted up in this school swarmed with serious errors in both language and spelling; I noted over 40 in 8 articles, covering about 50 lines. I asked who had prepared it; the first Brother assured me that it was the priest (Courveille) who had composed and written it. These Brothers are very young; their writing models are printed...(hurt by the Inspector's remarks, the first young Brother let out some secrets)...'This new-comer knows nothing and can do nothing'...that he was very annoyed for not having gone to the true Brothers at Lyons, and that he still intended to follow that plan; he had been pestered, and now realised that this institution would not last..." (Archives Départementales du Rhône: T - Versement de l'Université - XXV "Enseignement primaire, 1819-1841. Rapport de l'Inspecteur Guillard sur sa tournée en 1822", p.28).

Though Father Courveille was gifted with animated and eloquent speech, writing was not his strongpoint; two autographed letters preserved in the Marist Brothers archives give proof of this. It must be remembered that what was occurring at Feurs was not connected with Champagnat's work at Lavalla. These Brothers at Feurs were part of a separate institute that Courveille was attempting to found. He had already drawn up a list of regulations ("Rules") for his Brothers and it is of interest to note that he, contrary to Champagnat, used printed writing models. In Poupar's report of 1823 he described the Brothers' costume: "They wear a habit similar in design to that worn by the Brothers of St. Sauveur and Bourg-Argental, but the coat here is sky-blue, buttoned like a soutane, with a wide black collar". (Archives Départementales du Rhône: T - Vers. - XXV "Enseignement primaire, Rapport de l'Inspecteur Poupar, en 1823").

Regarding Courveille's poor spelling and grammar, in his Circulaire d'Aiguebelle, (4th June 1826) he wrote: "c'est" for "ces" - "étréngiers" for "étrangers" - "ho" for "oh" - "se" for "ce", etc.

He saw nothing incongruous in having agents who did the menial everyday tasks for the "Superior-General" and he played the role magnificently in his Marist religious habit: a top hat, a sweeping sky-blue cloak, and a swaggering cane."(133)

Throughout the period of Champagnat and Courveille living together in 1824 it seems that the busy Champagnat devoted himself to building the Hermitage, going back to Lavalla on Saturday evenings to hear confessions and to say Mass on Sundays and was content that Courveille acted as superior. In 1825 Champagnat, whilst still occupied almost daily with the building, had the unsuccessful task of seeking government authorisation for his Brothers, then their shifting from Lavalla to the Hermitage, plus his inspections of all the schools. Yet the Brothers that year had voted almost unanimously that he be their superior. They were rejecting Courveille, just as the Archbishop's Council had thought fit to admonish Courveille on 25th August 1825. (134) Besides, the Archbishop's Council had always regarded Champagnat as the principal founder of the Brothers. Courveille was obviously a man of contradictions. It was said that his repressed sentimentality during his latter days at the Hermitage caused him to rear a crow from which he would pluck feathers, crying "*Defend yourself!*" (135), something that many would regard as plain sadism.

Yet Champagnat had never ceased to regard Courveille as his own superior. He never lost his sympathy for him and when he soon received a letter written by Courveille on 4th June 1826 from Aiguebelle, in which Courveille pleaded to be allowed to return to the Hermitage, Marcellin wished to agree to his request. Courveille's letter had a

133. Hosie, op. cit., p. 76.

134. Archives de l'archevêché de Lyon, "25 août 1825 - Décisions du Conseil de Mgr de Pins: envoi de M. Terrailon à l'Hermitage; avertissement à M. Courveille", reg. délib. 5, p. 84 (This was the decision, mentioned above, inviting Fr. Terrailon to go to the Hermitage and, also, to instruct Fr. Courveille to confine his work to the Marist Brothers.)

135. "Renseignements divers sur M. Courveille provenant en majeure partie du frère Théodose", Archives générales des pères maristes, Rome, 922.122.2. Fr. Detours said that this information came from an old Brother at the Hermitage. (Fr. Detours, as mentioned above, was in charge of getting information on Champagnat for promoting the cause of "Beatification" by the Pope: Detours began his investigations in 1886.)

clumsily drawn shield and "Society of Mary" in the corner. Here are just a few extracts from his long missive:

"I cannot tell you how happy I am with my pilgrimage to the holy house of Our Lady of La Trappe; I have found here holy peace of soul. ... These good religious received me with the charity that marks the saints; they have all kinds of regards for strangers....

The superior here seems to take care to mortify and humiliate his inferiors on all occasions, and his inferiors seem to receive this with respect ... (136)

Oh, my very dear Brothers, how I wish the Hermitage might be a faint image... of the regularity, the mortification, silence, humility, renouncement of one's own will, ... Now, ... I am going to open my heart to you and let you share my sentiments... If you believe, ... that I am only a stumbling block in the holy Society of Mary, more harmful than useful, ... I pray you tell me simply, and then I will be able to live in the holy house where I am, to make sure of my salvation ...

I will not conceal from you, my very tender Brothers, that for some time I was in great trouble, seeing the little regularity (137) there was among us, differences of opinion, ... I believe it will perhaps be more useful to the dear Society of Mary if I be not there. I very much desire that whoever

136. Courveille seems to be admonishing the Brothers, between the lines, for their failure to appreciate his harsh actions against them when he thought they had committed any offence.

137. In religious life, the word "regularity" refers to the daily attendance of each community member to the various spiritual exercises that his religious institute expects each of its members to perform each day.

will be charged with directing it and be set up as superior, may be filled with the spirit of God, ... and the true intentions of the divine Mary.

I can assure you, and the august Mary is my witness, that I am very much attached to you, that I bear you all deeply in my heart, ... it is one of my greatest griefs to see myself separated from you; but, for the good of the Society, I resign myself ... Be so kind as to let me know as soon as possible what you believe is . . . (best).

*Your very devoted brother in
Christ Jesus and Mary,*

J. C. Courveille

f.d. et S.p.g.l.m.t. prêtre ind. (138)

Marcellin, perhaps not only through his personal sympathy for Courveille but also because Courveille was co-owner of the property,(139) wished to accede to Courveille's request and have him return to the Hermitage. However, when he spoke of the matter to Fr. Terrailon he met strong opposition. Terrailon insisted that once they had obtained Courveille's departure to Aiguebelle, the matter was closed! Marcellin was unhappy because he also thought that to abandon anyone was unchristian and that frustration of Courveille's hopes was something that could thrust him into great agonies of mind.

Next day, Fr. Colin (140) arrived at the Hermitage and Marcellin tried to persuade him to accept his own sentiments concerning Courveille.

138. "Lettre de M. Courveille au P. Champagnat", FMS Archives, Rome, 123/2, 4 juin 1826.

In the 36 letters of Courveille that are preserved in the Archives générales des pères maristes, the letters Courveille added after his signature were never consistent. Fr. Coste suggests that in this case they probably meant: f(on)d(ateur) et S(u)p(érieur) g(énéral) m(aris)t(e) prêtre ind(igne). (Coste & Lessard, O.M., 4, p. 520).

139. That is, the properties of Lavalla and the Hermitage. Also, of course, Marcellin knew that Courveille during seminary years had been the real leader in forming a group desiring to found a Society of Mary.

140. Colin, Founder of the Marist Fathers, had departed his parish of Cerdon in 1825 and was now, 1826, in Belley diocese actively promoting the Society of Mary.

Terraillon now became quite aggressive and much more vigorously pursued his own ideas. He declared:

"You are missing a good chance that may not come again. Courveille has in this area the reputation of a saint. If you have to exclude him later on, as could easily happen, all the odium will fall on you. But by using this chance, he will exclude himself.... Believe me: accept his resignation; you will be glad of it later on. (141)

Then Terraillon showed them a letter he had already written, urging Courveille to remain at La Trappe, and stating that his resignation had been accepted. Terraillon posted the letter and went to tell Fr. Barou V.G. Barou was very happy to see how Providence had arranged matters so as to settle secretly this misfortune. However, little by little, Courveille's fault became known at the Hermitage.(142)

After the departure of Courveille, the Council of the Archbishop proposed that Father Cattet V.G. give a Retreat to the Brothers at the Hermitage.(143) It seems that this Retreat may have had three purposes.

141. P. Zind, "Contribution à une Reprise des Travaux Historiques sur les Origines des Petits Frères de Marie", Bulletin, No. 163, July 1956, p.220.

142. For the next ten years of Courveille's life he was an unwanted priest. Expelled from the Diocese of Lyon in 1826 he managed to gain the confidence of the Bishop of Grenoble, and even of the Prefect of that area. With their support he set up a convent of Sisters of St. Clair and also a novitiate for teaching Brothers. However, he was unable to attract enough subjects to fulfil his promises of supplying teachers for country schools. Though his salaries were assured Courveille, once again at an impasse, apparently lost control of himself again. He set himself up in Apinac, where his mother was born and he owned property. In 1833 a serious moral scandal forced him to leave suddenly. Accepted in diocese of Bourges as a hospital chaplain, he had to leave in August 1835 as a result of another scandal. He then went to the diocese of Reims, which he left suddenly in April 1836, almost certainly for a similar reason. (J. Coste, Cours d' Histoire de la Société de Marie, Rome, 1965, p. 60.)

143. "5th July 1826: Father Cattet is happy to accept the task of trying to give a Retreat to the primary teachers in the building of the Hermitage at St. Chamond" (Archives de l'archevêché de Lyon, reg. délib. 5, pp.129-130.)

Firstly, it was probably thought that it would be a means of nullifying any moral harm caused by Courveille. There was also the question of a possible fusion of the Marist Brothers with the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and, thirdly, the financial state of the Hermitage needed urgent action. The Council moved on 2nd August 1826:

The deplorable state of the finances of the Brothers at the Hermitage makes a detailed statement of their situation most urgent. Agreed that such be asked for." (144)

We know that the Council, on 8th August, decided against the fusion with the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. With regard to finances, Champagnat obediently prepared the statement required by the Archbishop and on the next day, 7th August, he produced the information :

List of what we owe

1.	Mr. Maréchal of Lyons	12,000 (francs)
2.	Parish Priest of Ampuis	12,000 (145)
3.	P.P. of St. Peter's St. Chamond	1,700
4.	Courbon du Lathal (of Le Bachat)	1,000
5.	P.P. of Izieux	4,000
6.	The servant of Mr. Royer	1,000
7.	Audras of Lavalla	900
8.	Mr. Lagier - father & son St. Ch.	1,835
9.	Fr. Journoux of St. Chamond	400
10.	Merchant of Rive-de-Gier	300
11.	Maréchal	623
12.	Tinsmith	300
13.	Mr. Courbon Lyonnais (146)	1,000

144. Ibid. p. 132

145. The first loan of 12,000 francs was obtained by Fathers Champagnat and Courveille on 13th December 1825 from Madame Justine de Dioyonne in Lyons, before Lecourt, Notary Public. The second entry of 12,000 francs was a loan from the Parish Priest of Ampuis, the interest from which was intended to contribute to the salary of the Brothers who had recently opened the school there.

146. This person was the grocer.

14. Wool merchant		200
15. Mr. Rusand (the Lyons bookseller)		600
16. Guyot		200
17. Despinace (tailor)		600
18. Marie	300	
Servant of Guyot	<u>400</u>	(700)
		<u>38,850</u>

"Here is the account of what is due to me or
what can come in"

1. What I have at Lavalla		4,000
2. 1500 francs which are due to us for the salary of one of our Brothers, due this summer		1,500
3. The P.P. of Boulieu		500
4. Mayor of Bourg-Argental		800
5. The P.P. of Chavanay		525
6. Mr. Colomb		234
7. Mayor of St. Symphorien		510
8. Charlieu, due from Mayor		728
9. Father of Poinard, novice		200
10. P.P. of St. Symphorien d'Ozon		400
11. Novitiate fees, Br. Pierre		400
12. Martinol of Burdignes		400
13. Furet of St. Pol Chalencon		600
14. Br. Hilarion, balance of fee for which I have Promissory Note		230
15. Br. Ambrose, balance of fees		400
16. Br. Dominique, balance of fees		235
17. A total of 600 francs which I hold in Promissory Notes		<u>600</u>
		<u>12,271</u>

Father Champagnat then added, "I have 1,100 francs in the Bank."(147)

It is to be noted that Marcellin had not listed among his assets the land and building of the Hermitage, nor the loans for which this property was the security. As it stood, he was really in debt to the extent of 26,000 francs. This situation did not seem to have greatly worried Marcellin for nine months later, in four letters to the Archbishop and other superiors asking for a Chaplain to help him in his work at the Hermitage, he mentioned finance in only two of them and then in a general way: "*I'll not mention the keeping of accounts, of the debts to be paid*". The archives contain no record of the Archbishop coming to Champagnat's aid with further finance. Probably Marcellin submitted his balance sheet to Father Jean-Louis Duplay at the seminary; later on we find him paying money "to the Seminary".(148) The total expenses for the year 1826 came to nearly 24,000 francs.(149)

148. In the Account Book, 1826, of the Hermitage - which covers eleven pages, we find the usual expenses for a house still being finished but already housing a growing number of Brothers and Postulants. Sums were paid to bootmaker, clockmaker, wool merchant, dyer, carriers, wool-carders, hatter, tailor, locksmith, tinsmith for goods supplied. Other sums were paid to workmen, stone-masons, carpenters, tilers, wall-builders and plasterers. The doctor was paid and also the hospital at St. Chamond. Money was paid for charcoal, coal, timber, iron, tiles, bricks, plaster, dressed-stone and panes of glass. The repayment of loans was attended to, as also the interest thereon. Food bills covered grain, butter, potatoes, meat and wine, oil and onions,...The laundresses were paid for their work. Other items were travel, postage, yarn, hay and bran, horse-shoeing, iron for the windmill, soap,...pigs from Mr. Audras, grain from Mr. Couturier. Names sometimes eluded Champagnat: "to the man at St. Paul-en-Jarez"; to the man at Lardière; at times he had asked people to sign his book as a receipt - in good round rustic letters! As he spoke to these men he often drew patterns with his pen: after resharpening his quill, he tried it in a series of strokes, and at times made blots and alterations. In early March, Brother Stanislaus had bought the necessary gear for spinning silk-bobbins, etc. as a means of making money. The Archbishop gave his approval for this venture on 15th March, hence it seems the goods were bought before a permit had been granted. 18th May is the last entry in the handwriting of Courveille, who had then left to go to La Trappe at Aiguebelle: he did not remain there long, as we find Champagnat paid him 80 francs on 12th June. By the end of June the Hermitage had paid 16,000 francs, much of it for building materials.

149. Annales de l'Hermitage, 1826.

We note that money was given to Br. Stanislaus "to pay the laundresses" at the rate of 1 franc 70 c. per day, which was really a generous wage for those days.(150) Workmen were paid the standard wage of two francs per day; their days being carefully noted. A special entry mentioned, "*For the men who cut through the scrub, 30 francs*" - perhaps to make a road or start to clear a field.(151)

There remained the thorny problem of the co-ownership of land by Father Courveille for, as was to be expected, he had not stayed long at La Trappe.(152) When Fr. Colin refused to receive him into the Marist group at Belley, Courveille withdrew to the Marist Sisters at St. Clair, as their Chaplain. Fr. Gauché, P.P. of Chavanay (153)

150. Many years later (e.g. 1888) an investigation into the conditions of the 6,500 women doing domestic work for a living in this area, found that their wages were between 1.75f and 2f per day. (B. Plessy, La Vie Quotidienne en Forez avant 1914, St. Etienne, 1981, p. 72).

151. Although Champagnat entered "iron for the windmill, 10f.", there seems to be no trace of any such mill being in operation at the Hermitage. The horse was not neglected: hay and bran were bought for it, whilst it was re-shod from time to time, and there is also the entry that the horse's "collar is repaired". The panes of glass for the house windows, some "smallpanes", came from Rive-de-Gier. A great deal of plastering had to be done for the large house of five floors: we find "Antoine Robert, plasterer of St. Chamond" being paid 100 francs and then 600 francs. Good income (or a loan) enabled Marcellin to pay in May "1,000f. to Mr. Finaz, Notary, in St. Chamond", and the same day, "3,400f. to Mr. Montellier, iron merchant - and it was this man who sold Marcellin the first property for the Hermitage in May 1824.

152. He had not even asked officially to join!

153. Fr. Gauché, P.P. of Chavanay since 1809, (Br. Avit's spelling of "Gaucher" is incorrect). (M. l'Abbé J. Batia, Recherches Historiques sur le Forez Viennois, St. Etienne, 1924, p. 361).

prepared the way for a meeting.(154) It took place before Mr. Lions, solicitor of Chavanay. Courveille granted Champagnat:

"all rights in property that he has or might have, over all that comprises the establishment called the Hermitage, without reserve....except the right to live in a room of the said Hermitage when he pleases, ... with all the furniture he brought ..." (155)

This deed was agreed upon for 5,000 francs which Courveille received that day from Champagnat.(156) On the same day, 5th October 1826, Courveille agreed to a more simple solution for the Lavalla property; by which he allowed Marcellin to sell, in whatever manner he wished, any of the buildings at Lavalla that he would no longer need.(157) Champagnat informed Fr. Colin, who replied on 5th December:

154. Champagnat wrote to Courveille at end of September (this rough draft shows Marcellin's embarrassment):

"My dear Father Courveille,

I desire very much that you come or that you assign me a place for our interview. Fr. Terraillon not being at the Hermitage, and if the Vicars-General have not forbidden you, I... As I have to make a journey to Grenoble for an interview with the Archbishop". (FMS Archives, Rome: "Lettres de M. Champagnat" 26 septembre, A - CCH 2, p. 165; SI.09).

The answer came back quickly:

"+All for the greater glory of God and M.G.D.j.ch.Amen.

Rev. and dear Friend,

If you wish to give me the pleasure of seeing you and of conferring together on our business which we will complete, I hope, with the grace of God, and the help of our august Mary, in spite of evil tongues, in a just and satisfactory manner on your side as well as mine, and that we will always be united, I ask you to kindly come on Wednesday 4th or Thursday 5th October to St. Clair; after that I have to leave on a rather long journey. Give my regards to the Brothers; I commend myself to your prayers and to theirs. Receive, my very dear friend, the assurance of the attachment and sincere friendship with which I have the honour to be, ...J.C.Courveille f.d.s.p.g."

155. One such piece was a small barrel-organ. (Monographie de l'Hermitage, 5th Octobre, pp. 16.17: FMS Archives).

156. "Titres de propriété" FMS Archives, Hermitage, St. Chamond).

157. "Titres de propriété" Lavalla, FMS Archives, Hermitage, St. Chamond. Champagnat, in the future, twice sold parts of the Lavalla property in accordance with this agreement. (Coste & Lessard, O.M., Vol. 1, p. 416).

"We are very happy to hear the news that you have concluded matters with Fr. Courveille; this for us was a disturbing business ... "(158)

Marcellin never seemed to become unduly worried about finances, but the same could not be said for some of the Brothers. It seems Courveille had told them, as well as the Diocesan authorities, that Champagnat's project was doomed to failure; and when news filtered through that Courveille (after his brief stay at La Trappe) had gained the confidence of the Bishop of Grenoble and was about to set up in the former abbey of St. Antoine novitiates for both teaching Sisters and teaching Brothers,(159) there was some unrest at the Hermitage. Champagnat must have been grieved to see a small number of his Brothers, including Brother Dominique whom he valued so highly, desert the Hermitage to go and join Courveille's new congregation.(160)

158. "Lettre du P. Colin au P. Champagnat (5 dec 1826)", FMS Archives, Rome, 122/1.

159. Courveille once again was showing his ability to impress people and to persuade them as he wished. For instance, a rich lady had offered to pay the necessary 60,000 francs which Courveille required to purchase this abbey at Grenoble. (Avit, Annales, p. 48) Bishop Simon of Grenoble approved of the venture and the Municipal Council seemed happy enough with the fact that the abbey was being used. (Document 183, O.M., Vol. 1, p.448) Courveille persuaded the Prefecture to grant him 200 francs to help with each Brother's training. (O.M., Vol. 3, p.825) It seems that the money for the purchase of the abbey was to have been paid over several years. However, on the decease of the rich lady, her heirs refused to pass on the 60,000 francs to Courveille and, penniless, he departed Grenoble. Frère Avit mentioned his "sudden departure, without informing people to where he was going" (Avit, Annales, p. 48) and so it seemed that he had lost control of himself again and was fleeing to avoid a public scandal.

160. In Avit's Annales de l'institut, n. 71, he wrote that Brothers Dominique and Antoine left the Hermitage and followed Courveille. (G. Michel's Chronologie, p. 45, states this also) Yet no other document mentions "Antoine" and Fr. Coste thinks it unlikely (O.M., Vol. 3, p. 823) especially since the Hermitage accounts book for October 1826 shows a sum of money having been given to Br. Dominique, but there is no mention of Antoine. Br. Owen Kavanagh, in letter to author, wrote, "I'd say it was impossible, for Br. Antoine would not have known Fr. Courveille and still less esteemed him; he was Fr. Champagnat's very close friend and had just made the perpetual vows - 11th October, one of the 8 first to do so; see O.M. 1 p. 475. Two possibilities: the name St. Antoine led to rumours; perhaps a young Brother went with Br. Dominique and he may have been called Br. Antoine something." Elsewhere in Avit's Annales, p. 48, he wrote that 2 or 3 Brothers left the Hermitage to follow Courveille, but on this page the only one he named was Dominique.

How was Fr. Terrailon taking all this? So far, that year, he had bluntly refused the sick Champagnat's request (made in January) that he become his heir. He knew that Courveille had so strongly criticized Champagnat that the Diocesan authorities had sent Vicar-General Cattet to investigate affairs and that, after his inspection of the Hermitage, he had suggested that the Marist Brothers be fused with the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. All of this was discouraging enough, but on top of it all was the fact that the financial position was precarious, suggesting that the whole affair might suddenly collapse at any moment. What is more, some of the best Brothers were deserting the ship. Terrailon and Champagnat had never really got along together, nor did the Brothers (according to Br. Avit) get on well with Terrailon. Hence it is not surprising that Terrailon, who had also found himself over-loaded with duties after Courveille had left, took the first chance that came his way to withdraw from the Hermitage. Thus, at the end of October, he used the pretext of having to preach a series of jubilee sermons to abandon the Hermitage, never to return.(161)

Marcellin had still more with which to contend. His first recruit, Br. Jean-Marie, leaving the institute in 1822 had also spent 3 or 4 weeks at La Trappe. He decided to return to Marcellin, who welcomed him back and appointed him Director of the Marist school at St. Symphorien-sur-Coise. He stayed there but one year (162) before he returned to the community at Lavalla (and Hermitage in 1825). At the conclusion of the Brothers' Retreat in October 1826, Marcellin reappointed him Director of St. Symphorien or, if he preferred, Director of Charlieu. Amazingly, Jean-Marie refused; his excessive spirituality was becoming his undoing. We noted earlier how he would want to deprive himself of much of his clothing and he would also deprive himself of so much food that he was literally ruining his health.

161. Terrailon became a curate until appointed (probably at Champagnat's request, says Fr. Coste) to Notre Dame in Saint-Chamond. He joined Fr. Colin's Marist Fathers when they took vows in 1836. He was chosen Assistant-General in 1836, but was not re-elected Assistant at the 1854 Chapter. During 1856-1859 he was Provincial in Paris, having been appointed by Fr. Favre the Superior-General.

162. Les annales de Saint-Symphorien, pp. 7,8.

Pursued by the idea of a chimerical perfection he used to wear hair shirts, whip himself and would pray for hours out in the cold wintry conditions with arms outstretched. He now refused to accept any responsible position. Marcellin, who had a great attachment to him, tried to get him to become more normal and, hence, more acceptable to his confreres. His efforts were of no avail and Jean-Marie, in this same month of October, had to be dismissed from the institute.(163)

Marcellin must have felt greatly saddened by the loss of Jean-Marie, but worse was to follow. Jean-Marie's departure was soon followed by that of Brother Jean François (Stephen Roumesy), another of Marcellin's early recruits and a person who had been dear to his heart.(164) This Brother had been greatly renowned for his zeal and success in giving religious instruction to children and also for his charity to the poor. Unfortunately, he eventually became too independent and, being a nuisance to his confreres, Marcellin brought him back to the Hermitage where he was put in charge of the buying and selling. He showed little interest in this and when a certain priest whom he knew well, Fr. de Lupé,(165) told him that he planned to establish an orphanage

163. Br. Jean-Baptiste in his VIE, p. 175, tells of his dismissal ("... fut obligé de le congédier") and even Father Coste uses the words, "... fut renvoyé." Well, Coste would have followed Br. Jean-Baptiste, the sole recorder of this incident of those who were then present; but, it seems possible that Marcellin would have permitted Jean-Marie to have himself make such an important decision. Marcellin was so kind and charitable to his Brothers that I think, when he felt that for the institute's sake Jean-Marie must go, he would have so explained things to him that such a course of action would have been accepted by that person. Fr. Bourdin, writing about 1830, seems to have thought similarly when he wrote that Champagnat said to Jean-Marie, "Eh! bien, c'est là que je vous voulois voir arriver." (Oh, that's good: that was the point to which I wanted to see you arrive.") M. Bourdin, op. cit., p. 14.) Jean-Marie returned to his mother's town where he farmed, married and had two children.

164. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p. 177.

165. Fr. de Lupé had been a member of Bochard's Society of the Cross of Jesus. In a castle owned by his family he was attempting to set up a novitiate for religious teachers in place of Bochard's former novitiate. (P. Zind, Les Nouvelles Congrégations de Frères Enseignants en France de 1800 à 1830, St. Genis-Laval, 1969, p. 327).

and wanted this Brother to be its Director, Jean François agreed. He spoke to Marcellin about it; but Marcellin, who knew this Brother extremely well, urged him not to go. Shortly afterwards, this Brother departed without even telling Marcellin.(166) Then two or three other Brothers, including his beloved Br. Dominique, left Marcellin and his Institute to join the new group that Courveille was setting up at Grenoble.(167)

The year 1826 had been full of contradictions. Marcellin's serious illness had been followed by a succession of calamities. Courveille's complaints about Marcellin to the Diocesan authorities were followed by an unsatisfactory report by a Vicar-General who advocated Marcellin's congregation be absorbed by another group. The financial situation seemed hopeless; one of Marcellin's two helper-priests had to be sent away because of a morals scandal whilst the other one had departed at the first excuse he got. To cap it all, some of the best Brothers were deserting the ship. In any case, the government had turned down the Institute's request for legal authorisation, so why should it continue?

We know from letters Marcellin wrote next year (1827) that all the adverse happenings during 1826 had had a crushing effect upon him. Yet his total faith in the providential nature of the work he had been endeavouring to set up seemingly gave him the strength and courage to continue with his project in spite of the succession of disasters in recent months that seemed to be tearing his whole work to shreds. His letter of late May (1827) to Archbishop de Pins reveals that he had not passed unscathed by the hard times of the previous year. A few days

166. The orphanage set up by this new congregation (at Lupé, only 20 kms east of the Hermitage) was disbanded two years later by Archbishop de Pins. The former Brother Jean François later "led a wretched life, and died overwhelmed with grief and affliction." (Br. Jean-Baptiste, *VIE*, Vol. 1, p.178).

167. Br. G. Michel, *Chronologie....*, p. 45. (But Br. Dominique and whoever else had departed with him, soon returned to the Hermitage).



This is part of Champagnat's room at the Hermitage. The two stoles and other religious articles are to preserve his memory, since he slept and worked here for some 15 years. Moving from left to right: on the side of the press is his 1838 Passport to Paris, and below a list of other priests at the Hermitage with him. In the corner is a wooden tabernacle above which are gilded wooden statues of the Catholic Church's saints Alcysius Gonzaga and Francis Xavier which were in Marcellin's 1836 chapel. Below is a priedieu of Br. François - well made by a tradesman; the top lifts to provide space for books, as also does the front. The wooden frontal (doors missing but four hinges visible) of a large cherry-wood press is the front of the bed from the Donnet house (brought to Hermitage 1935), the bed in which Br Stanislaus spent the night recuperating (after he and Marcellin had been rescued at night from the snow - mentioned above in thesis). Inside are some of the clothes used to wrap Champagnat's bones after his exhumation. Above is the portrait painted by Ravery, the St. Chamond artist, on the morning Marcellin died. The next two pictures show Fr Colin and Br François: then Br François' grand-father clock plus a metal brazier to take hot coals for warming the room.



A view of the present-day back-section of the Hermitage. The first building constructed is shown in the centre of the picture facing the camera, in the shape of an L with its left wing along the Gier. It has shutters on windows and stones on tiles on roof. Brothers' vegetable garden in centre foreground.

later he wrote to Vicar-General Barou, "*I still retain a firm belief that God wills this work, but alas! He perhaps wants other men to establish it.*"(168) The amazing thing is that the unforeseen difficulties seemed to add zest to his work. We have already noted that financial difficulties never seemed to hinder his ability to undertake ever greater financial contracts. Also we have noted that probably the main item objected to by the Government in his request for authorization was the fact that the Brothers would take vows. In the Retreat of 1826 Marcellin had eight of his Brothers take the perpetual religious vows for the first time. (169) Br. Jean-Baptiste wrote of these vows:

"They were of two kinds:- Temporary vows, made for three years, and the perpetual vows. As the vow of Chastity might give rise to difficulties, this vow and that of Poverty were delayed until the Brothers made profession; and the Novices, after two years' probation, were allowed to make the temporary vow of obedience only. At first the vows were made without any ceremony, and immediately after receiving Holy Communion. Later on, a special form was drawn up and inserted in a register kept for the purpose. This form was signed kneeling by the Brothers who made the vows."(170)

Again, it is startling to discover that Champagnat founded three more schools during that year of 1826: St. Paul-en-Jares (Loire), Mornant (Rhône) and Neuville-sur-Saône (Rhône). It is obvious that Marcellin, in spite of his grave illness earlier that year, still possessed a seemingly inexhaustible stock of energy. One thing sustaining him must have been the great success that his Brothers' schools were having. For instance, in the Minutes of the District Council of Loire

168. "Lettres de Marcellin Champagnat", FMS Archives, Rome, .. 05.27: A: CCH 2, p. 171-171; SI.17.

169. Br. Antoine, the person rumoured to have left and followed Courveille, was No. 1 on the list.

170. Br. Jean-Baptiste, VIE, Vol. 1, p.183.

"Until the Brothers made profession" refers to their "final" profession - i.e. the taking of perpetual vows. However, it seems that Br. Jean-Baptiste probably erred when he wrote that the above situation on vows occurred in 1826. In Br. Sylvestre's Mémoires he mentioned that it was Fr. Colin, in 1840 after Marcellin's death, who ruled that the vows of poverty and obedience be delayed until final profession. Sylvestre says that until 1840 the vows were simply of two kinds - temporary (usually for three years) and the perpetual. He also mentions that the time period for temporary vows varied - his own first temporary vows were made for one month only. (Mémoires, p. 125).

for the meeting of 23rd August 1826 it was written:

"... In view of the insufficiency of resources in practically all the communes, the Council greatly rejoices and sees with very much interest the success obtained by the nascent institution of the Brothers of Mary whose financial requirements are much less onerous (than those of the De La Salle Brothers)."(171)

The Prefect of Loire made a visit to the Hermitage and was pleased to authorise the creation of a cemetery in the Hermitage grounds for any future community deceased members.(172) A short time later he persuaded the Council of the Département of Loire to vote a grant of 800 francs to the Brothers at the Hermitage.(173) Also, a letter that arrived near the end of the year must have given great heart to Marcellin. On 5th December Father Colin wrote to Marcellin (174) and in his letter he gave great praise for the marvellous progress that Marcellin's Marist Brothers were making.

Champagnat had always seen his work as something so urgently needed that he felt it must be the work of God. Apparently this provided him with such inner strength that he conquered obstacle after obstacle. We have observed his constancy in the face of great financial difficulties, his remarkable continual striving against opposition from some ecclesiastical superiors and his determination to continue even after failure to gain authorisation for his teaching Brothers. We can well understand why he made no new appeal for authorisation during the uncertainties and trials of 1826. In fact, his next attempt to gain authorisation will not be until January 1828. The year 1827 will be a period of recovery during

171. Archives du Département du Rhône: T: Conseil Général 1816-1832; Enseignement Primaire, Versements de l'Université, XXVI, 2^e partie.

172. Bulletin de l'Institut des Petits Frères de Marie, Vol. XI, p.313.

173. Archives du Département du Rhône: T: Conseil Général 1816-1832; Enseignement Primaire, Versements de l'Université, XXVI, 2^e partie. This sum of 800 francs was included in the budget for the following financial year and was paid to Champagnat in October 1827.

174. This the first-preserved letter from Colin to Champagnat. ("Lettre du P. Colin au P. Champagnat", FMS Archives, Rome, 5 dec 1826, No.122/1.)

which Marcellin revealed himself truly as a remarkable leader of men. Viscount William Slim, Allied war leader in S.E. Asia during World War II, remarked:

"How a man uses power, is ultimately the test of all leadership; it stands or falls by this."

The Brothers rallied behind Marcellin closer than ever during 1827. Marcellin believed in personal contact with each Brother, and held passionately to the force of example and the value of sharing the life and work of his men. He believed he was doing for others what God wanted him to do; but he often said that he could do nothing without the assistance of Jesus and Mary to whom he prayed daily. He said,

"Jesus and Mary are forever the solid buttress of my confidence...." (175)

Let us now follow Marcellin's leadership during 1827 and may each reader form his or her own judgment on its quality.

175. "Lettre de M. Champagnat", FMS Archives, Rome, ..05.27 (date): Monseigneur de Pins (Destinataire): A - CCH 2, p.168-169; SI.15.