

BROTHER GERARD ALTENDORFER, O. CARM.

1829-1916

By the REV. ANTHONY C. DRESSEL, O. Carm.
from *The Sword*, July 1940

A history of the American Province would be incomplete and would lose much of the human interest without mentioning some of the prayerful, diligent and exemplary Brothers who toiled so faithfully and who were in so many respects the right hands and supports of the Fathers. A very touching and interesting example of the Carmelite brotherhood was to be found in good old Brother Gerard who spent almost fifty years in the Order and was always highly regarded for his diligence, his prayerfulness and his rigid observance of the Rule. Brother Gerard Altendorfer was born in Schimmelbach, Bavaria, November 27, 1829, of Raymond Altendorfer and Catherine Stoeckinger. He spent his boyhood and the early part of his youth in Germany where he became first a brewer and then an expert baker. He then came to America where, at the age of forty-one, he met Carmelite Fathers; and, becoming interested in the Order, he entered as a candidate in 1870. In due time he became a Novice and was professed October 18, 1872.

His activities were divided between New Baltimore, Chicago and Scipio; and in each of those places he is still held in holy remembrance and is often recalled in the conversations of the older parishioners.

In New Baltimore Brother Gerard for a number of years was employed as the community baker. Later he was employed as chef in the Chicago community. Brother Gerard was one of the best liked men in the New Baltimore community while he was there during the '80's and '90's. Smoking was the only diversion he had and even this he moderated according to his sense of religious decorum.

In 1903 after the new college in Chicago had been build, Brother Gerard found the many stairs too much and consequently he was transferred back to New Baltimore and for many years he served as sacristan, sexton and doorman of the now smaller community.

In the fall of 1915 his health began to decline and he was transferred to Scipio. Brother had spent some of his younger years in Scipio and he was glad to spend his declining days there. He took a lively interest in all departments of the house and farm. It was his custom to make the rounds of the big farm regularly and to examine fences and gates, reporting all urgent repairs to the Prior. He also toured the barns and out buildings. Methodical and regular, he systematically divided his tours of inspection for each day, the rest of the day being spent praying his rosary and in meditation. Even a few weeks before he died he methodically went over all the vestments in the sacristy of the church and the chapel; mended what needed attention; polished the chalices and saw that all was in order.

Father Anastasius Smits warned the Prior of Brother's approaching death. However, the break came very suddenly; he died on December 5, 1916. He received all the Sacraments peacefully and happily, passing on to his reward fully prepared exteriorly and interiorly. In his own methodical way he had always taken a deep interest, even to the last, in all that concerned his Order and his God.

Brother Gerard had lived to the ripe age of eighty-seven unknown to the world, yet in the hearts of the Carmelites of our Province he will always be remembered as a holy, industrious, quiet, charitable soul. One of the finest tributes that can be paid to Brother Gerard is that every priest, cleric or brother who came in contact with him always loved and revered him. Yet Brother Gerard's contact with the Community was chiefly through services he rendered with a happy smile and usually without saying a word. He was indifferent to a heroic degree to the circumstances and fortunes of daily life. He always minded his own affairs and took care of his

own duties, seeking, when they were finished, the silence of his room or the peaceful quiet of the chapel.

Happy in his work and his prayers, Brother Gerard was never known to be impatient or angry. His contentment and peace were in themselves a daily conference to the Community and blessed indeed were the houses favored with his presence. Loyal and devoted to Mary and her beloved Son, had he lived over one hundred years he would have been the same patient and cheerful Brother Gerard.