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Leper Priest of Moloka'i traces the life of Father Damien from his boyhood in rural Belgium to his death at the leper settlement after sixteen years of remarkable accomplishments. Damien overcame major obstacles to become a Catholic priest and serve as a missionary in Hawai'i. To his spiritual ministry he added the practice of medicine and the skill of a master builder of chapels, churches, and houses, both professions that he taught himself. He decried human suffering, and in his medical practice he emulated the example of his patron saint, Saint Damien the physician, who led many to Christianity by the example of the Good Samaritan. This biography presents and analyzes much new information about Damien and his years in Hawai'i. The correspondence between Damien, his colleagues in the Catholic church, his Protestant supporters, and agents of the Hawaiian Board of Health gives a fuller understanding of the extent of Damien's work at the settlement and the tensions underlying his relations with Church bureaucrats, who were both impressed by his energy and zeal and irritated by his willfulness and independence. But even his detractors could not deny that he was almost singlehandedly responsible for tremendous improvements to Kalaupapa in the face of overwhelming odds. This is the story of one humble man with faith in God and in himself, who faced gargantuan challenges and triumphed.

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