

François de Sales, Bp. of Geneva

THE

CONSOLING THOUGHTS

OF

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

GATHERED FROM HIS WRITINGS, AND ARRANGED IN ORDER,

BY THE

REV. PÈRE HUGUET.

"You cannot read anything more useful than the works of ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, in which everything is pleasing and consoling."—FENELON.

TRANSLATED FROM THE

SEVENTH FRENCH EDITION.

DUBLIN :

M. H. GILL & SON, 50, UPPER SACKVILLE-ST.

1877.

More Free Items at www.catholickingdom.com

ADVERTISEMENT

TO

THE SIXTH FRENCH EDITION.

Six editions of this little work, published in a short time, tell better than any words of ours the popularity which St. Francis de Sales enjoys amongst us. Many sick and wounded souls have found in these sweet and affecting pages a heavenly consolation.

Encouraged by this success, the honour of which belongs to God and His blessed servant, we have again with pen in hand run through the works of the holy Bishop of Geneva, to glean carefully whatever had escaped us on our former tour. Nor has our labour been in vain; we have gathered new flowers, whose beauty and perfume yield in no respect to the first.* To introduce them in this edition, we have been obliged to lop off a good many

* The author has scarcely taken anything from the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, this admirable book being in the hands of every one.

of the old chapters which were not so well suited to the object of the book. We have acted thus with the less regret as we have published the omitted portions, complete, in two other volumes: the *Consoling Piety of St. Francis de Sales*, and the *Month of Immaculate Mary by St. Francis de Sales*. These two works form a complete course of consolation for all the trials of life.

We may be permitted to give a short extract from a late number of the *Catholic Bibliography*, which contained an article on *Consoling Thoughts*. The idea of publishing the article was most remote from our mind, on account of the many marks of very great kindness towards us which it bears; but remembering that the merit of this work belongs entirely to St. Francis de Sales, we have felt impelled to give at least an extract, as a new and encouraging proof of the opportuneness of our little book.

“The very title of the book,” it says, “pleases, and should secure a large number of readers. How many souls are there to-day who stand in need of being encouraged and consoled? Want of confidence is the great obstacle in the work of the Christian apostleship. Discouragement is the evil of our period, because in general the Christian life, or SANCTITY, appears like a sharp mountain, which only few persons can ascend; in despair of arriving at its

summit the majority of men remain below on the plains. The mere word 'sanctity' frightens. The *Lives of the Saints*, which ought to encourage, often discourage, by their list of heroic virtues; we gladly conclude that such a state of perfection is suited only to a very small number, and we remain out of the ways of sanctity for fear of not being able to walk in them.

"Blessed then be the pious author who has received the happy inspiration of assembling together the *Consoling Thoughts of St. Francis de Sales*, the sweetest and most amiable of the saints, and one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life!

"It is especially by his admirable union of firmness and mildness that St. Francis de Sales shines in the first rank of ascetic writers. Who else ever painted virtue under lovelier colours, or made it easier and more practicable? Who ever knew better how to enlighten and bring back souls that had withdrawn from God, or that wearied themselves in his service by an unreasonable fear?

"Happy then and useful inspiration, to gather from his works the thoughts most fitted to enlighten pious and timorous souls, to console them, and to dilate their hearts dried up by fear! Father Huguet has given us, in this little work, the quintessence of every thing that our amiable saint wrote most sweet

and consoling, especially in his letters, in which that heart so good and tender, which God had formed to comfort the afflicted, is entirely revealed. The book is of the greatest assistance to the simple faithful, and to directors and confessors charged with comforting discouraged and troubled souls.

“A word now as to the method adopted. The author read, he tells us, with pen in hand, the works of the holy Bishop of Geneva; and, after noting the different passages which referred to the same subject, he arranged them in such order as to form a single chapter. A page is thus sometimes collected from seven or eight places in the saint's writings. Yet such is the connexion of ideas that we scarcely perceive the labour, and every thing seems to flow as from one fountain-head. As to the graceful, artless style of St. Francis de Sales, the author has lightly re-touched it in some places, changing a few antiquated expressions that would be little intelligible now-a-days. Without altering any thing in substance, he has considered it a duty to suppress certain details and comparisons, whose want of simplicity, a common fault at present, might cloy the work. Everywhere we have the good shepherd, who, after the example of his Divine Master, instructs, cheers, and consoles, by the help of parables and

similitudes, in the great art of using which perhaps he never had an equal.

“To add more clearness and authority to the book, the author has from time to time placed at the foot of the page some notes taken from the most esteemed writings of our greatest masters of the spiritual life, particularly Bossuet and Fenelon. These notes, happily selected, give a new value to the work. Should we now recommend it to all those whose souls have need to be encouraged and consoled—in a word, to all the faithful?”

INTRODUCTION.



“The writings of St. Francis de Sales are the fruit of grace and experience.”—*Fenelon*.

THE great evil of our period is discouragement. Tempers and characters have become weak and degenerate.

Every one agrees in saying that the most common obstacle, and the one most difficult to be overcome, which all those meet who labour for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of pious souls, is want of confidence. The great evil that Jansenism wrought in the midst of us has not yet entirely disappeared: many still believe that perfection consists only in fearing the Lord and in trembling before Him, who, in His mercy, permits us to call Him *Our Father*, and to name Him *the good God*.

The generality of authors have placed in the *Lives of the Saints* an account of their heroic virtues only, without a single word of the defects and miseries which God left in them, in order to preserve them

in humility and to make them more indulgent towards their brethren; yet the history of their weaknesses would, according to the judicious remark of St. Francis de Sales, have done the greatest good to a large number of souls, who imagine that sanctity can, and should, be exempt, even in this world, from all alloy and all imperfection. It is to remedy, as far as lies in our power, these inconveniences, that we have gathered together, under appropriate headings, from the writings of the sweetest and most amiable of all the saints, those passages which are best calculated to enlighten pious souls, and to expand their hearts withered with fear.

The writings of St. Francis de Sales are admirably suited to times of trial and sadness. The soul enjoys in them an atmosphere of mild salubrity that strengthens and renews it. The doctrine there is holy and profound, under a most amiable exterior; the style adds, by its simple *naïveté*, to the charm of a clear and ingenuous fancy; we are instructed while we imagine ourselves distracted, and admire while we smile.

We hesitate not to say that no saint has ever contributed so much as St. Francis de Sales, by his immortal writings, to make piety loved and practised in all classes of society.

“Under his pen,” says the best of his biographers,

“devotion is noble, true, and rational; courtesy of manners, a spirit of sociality, all the charms of a well-ordered piety, form its *cortege*, if we may use the expression, and yet it is not disguised in order to appear the more agreeable. Everywhere the author’s sweetness appears without weakness, and his firmness without bitterness. He teaches us to respect decorum, which he calls the gracefulness of virtue, to rise above nature without destroying it, to fly little by little towards heaven like doves when we cannot soar thither like eagles, that is to say, to sanctify ourselves by ordinary means. There the mind contemplates truth, unveiled in majestic splendour, bedecked with maxims equally elegant and profound, clad in a style noble, flowing, and natural, relieved by the justness of the expressions, sometimes fine and delicate, sometimes vivid and impressive, always graceful and varied: this is simplicity, with all the merit of beauty, for every idea is rendered by the proper word, and every word embellishes the thought. There, above all, the heart tastes an inexpressible pleasure; because the sweetness of the sentiment always seasons the precept, while the delicacy of the precaution that accompanies it secures its acceptance, and the artless candour and goodness of the author, who paints himself without intending it, make him beloved; at the same time

the soul, embalmed in what it reads, deliciously participates in the sweetest and purest perfume of true piety.”*

The style of St. Francis de Sales is a picture of his heart as much as of his mind: we feel that he loves and deserves to be loved, but that he wishes above all things that we should love God.

A special characteristic of St. Francis de Sales is, that the frequent use he makes of figures and the comparisons which he endlessly multiplies, never weary. This style would be clumsy in another author; with our saint, it is a new pleasure, which draws away the reader and attracts him every moment, as a gentle magnet, and this with so much the more ease as the reader does not perceive it. One is led along unresistingly, yielding with pleasure to the charms of this enchanting style. An effect, so rare and wonderful, is owing not only to our saint's judicious choice of figures and comparisons, but also to his amiable character, to the sprightliness of his sentiments, and to the transports of his love for God, which burst forth even in the

* *Life of St. Francis de Sales*, by M. the Curé of Saint Sulpice. This beautiful work has met with a success which surprises no one except its author, whose modesty and evangelical simplicity can alone equal his learning and his zeal for the conversion of souls.

amidst of the most abstract truths. He cannot contain the fire that consumes him; he allows it to escape by every sense. Moreover, he so well unites simplicity of diction with beauty of metaphor, that, in perusing his works, we feel the ornaments to flow from his pen without an effort on his part to seek them. A tender and compassionate soul, he is full of charity towards his friends. Let us hear him speak:—"Through a great part of my soul I am poor and weak, but I have a boundless and almost immutable affection for those who favour me with their friendship. Whoever challenges me in the contest of friendship must be very determined, for I spare no effort. There is no person in the world who has a heart more tender and affectionate towards his friends than I, or one who feels a separation more acutely."

We have so often heard the following affecting words repeated, that they seem to have fallen from the mouth of the sweet Saviour Himself:—"It has pleased God to make my heart thus. I wish to love this dear neighbour ever so much—ever so much I wish to love him! Oh! when shall we be all melted away in meekness and charity towards our neighbour? I have given him my whole person, my means, my affections, that they may serve him in all his wants."

This benignity, this gentleness, which breathed through the whole conduct of our saint, made St. Vincent de Paul exclaim with touching simplicity:—
“O my God! how good must Thou be, since the Bishop of Geneva is so good!”

It is in his works that he has deposited the richest treasures of this sweet sensibility and of this playful imagination, which enabled him to lend to the driest subjects and the severest precepts of the evangelic law a charm that makes them loved even by the profane.

The French Academy proposed the writings of St. Francis de Sales as a model to all, even at a time when it extolled the faults of Corneille.

To make himself all to all, St. Francis de Sales descends to the level of the simple faithful, and there he loves to rest. Sometimes he places himself with his *Philothea* in the midst of the stormy sea of the world, and there casts out the anchor of faith; again, he takes his stand on the high road, to show to the multitude, who pass indifferent and distracted along, the narrow way that leads to heaven. We might say that he smooths its roughness, so carefully does he conceal it under flowers. These are not deceitful flowers, by which virtue is disfigured in the endeavour to render it more attractive; they are those flowers of the soul which perfume with-

out corrupting it, secret joys, interior consolations, ineffable delights, the anticipated inheritance of God's elect upon earth. The picture which he draws of devotion can only be compared to that of charity by St. Paul. "In his writings," says Pere de Tourne mine, "we have the morality of the Sacred Scriptures and the Holy Fathers reduced to true principles and practical rules."

The doctrine of St. Francis de Sales is like a beautiful river which takes its rise in pure and elevated regions, and which, descending to the lowlands, spreads wide its banks, in order to reflect a broader expanse of heaven; it is decked with the flowers of the prairie which it gathers on its course, and carries to the sea a tribute only of limpid and perfumed waters.

According to St. Francis de Sales, we must not be too punctilious in the practice of virtues, but approach them honestly, with liberty, in a *grosso modo* way. "Walk simply in the way of the Lord," he says, "and do not torment your mind. We must hate our defects, but with a tranquil and quiet hatred—not with a spiteful and troubled hatred—and, if necessary, have patience to witness them and to turn them to account by a holy self-abasement. For want of this, my daughter, your imperfections, which you view so closely,

trouble you much, and by this means are retained, there being nothing that better preserves our defects than fretfulness and anxiety to remove them." (*Sermon for the Feast of St. Magdalen.*)

He applies to himself what he counsels to others:—
"I know what sort of a being I am; yet even though I feel myself miserable, I am not troubled at it; nay, I am sometimes joyful at it, considering that I am a truly fit object for the mercy of God, to which I continually recommend you."

This devotion, at least in appearance so easy, naturally pleases persons of the world, who, like the Count Bussy-Rabutin, say: "I merely wish to get into Heaven, and no higher." This nobleman, writing in another place, says:—"Save us with our good Francis de Sales; he conducted people to Heaven by beautiful ways." Yet these beautiful ways were no other than the narrow way of which the Gospel speaks; only our amiable saint knew how to smooth its entrance and to hide its thorns under flowers.

St. Francis de Sales particularly excelled in comforting the afflicted and the sick; a few words falling from his heart sufficed to calm and enlighten them; his words entered into their soul as an oil of great sweetness, which moderated the heat of their malady. Let us hear him console a pious person

to whom sickness was an insupportable burden :—
“Be not annoyed to remain in bed without meditation, for to endure the scourges of our Lord is no less a good than to meditate. No, indeed ; but it is much better than to be on the cross with Jesus Christ, merely to contemplate Him in prayer.” To another, who was troubled at the sight of her miseries, he said :—“When we happen to fall, let us cast down our heart before God, to say to Him, in a spirit of confidence and humility, ‘Mercy, Lord ! for I am weak.’ Let us arise in peace, unite again the thread of our affections, and continue our work.”

St. Francis de Sales was so much the better qualified to tranquillize and encourage souls inclined to diffidence and depression, as he had himself been obliged to pass through the severest trials, and arrived at the possession of peace of heart only by a total abandonment to God. “Since at every season of life, early or late, in youth or in old age, I can expect my salvation from the pure goodness and mercy of God alone, it is much better to cast myself from this moment into the arms of His clemency than to wait till another time. The greater part of the journey is over ; let the Lord do with me according to His will ; my fate is in His hands ; let Him dispose of me according to His good pleasure.”

The pious M. Olier, that great master of the spiritual life, very much esteemed St. Francis de Sales.

“ God,” he says, “ wishing to raise him up as a torch in the midst of His Church to enlighten an immense number, replenished him with the most marvellous gifts of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, proportioned to His designs. As for his knowledge, it was evidently more than human, and the effect of the Divine Spirit.”

If you wish to know Francis de Sales thoroughly, to be initiated into the most secret mysteries of that vast understanding and that perfect heart, read and re-read his *Letters*, in which every subject, from the most humble to the most sublime, from a simple how-do-you-do to a description of ecstasies and eternal beatitudes, is treated of in the style that best suits it. Read, above all, the *Letters to Madame de Chantal*, and those which treat of the *Direction of souls*. Considering these admirable letters, Bossuet says:—“ Francis de Sales is truly sublime; there is no one among moderns with such sweetness, who has a hand so steady and experienced as his, to elevate souls to perfection and to detach them from themselves.” The letter written after the death of his mother is of a primitive simplicity, and a sublime model of Christian resignation; we imagine that we hear St. Augustine weeping over St. Monica, and the tears it makes us shed have nothing of bitterness, so sweet is the death of the just when thus related.

The learned and pious Archbishop of Cambray continually recommended the perusal of our Saint's writings. "You cannot read anything more useful," says Fenelon, "than the books of St. Francis de Sales; everything there is consoling and pleasing, though he does not say a word but to help us to die. His artless style displays an amiable simplicity, which is above all the flourishes of the profane writer. You see a man who, with great penetration and a perfect clearness of mind to judge of the reality of things, and to know the human heart, desires only to speak as a good-natured friend, to console, to solace, to enlighten, to perfect his neighbour. No person was better acquainted than he with the highest perfection; but he repeated himself for the little, and never disdained anything, however small. He made himself all to all, not to please all, but to gain all, and to gain them to Jesus Christ, not to himself."

To this judgment of the pious Bishop of Cambray we shall add that of the learned Bourdaloue:—"The doctrine of St. Francis de Sales is a food, not of earth, but of heaven, which, from the same substance, nourishes, like the manna, all kinds of persons; and I am able say, without offending against the respect which I owe to all other writers, that after the Holy Scriptures there are no works that have better main-

tained piety among the faithful than those of this holy bishop."

The illustrious Monsignore of Paris shared the same sentiments. "All that can contribute," he says, "to make the most amiable of saints better known to the world must be useful to the cause of our holy religion."

Thus, the three men who were the glory of the clergy of France in the age of Louis XIV. were unanimous in esteeming and praising the works of this great master of the spiritual life.

Protestants themselves are obliged to render justice to the exceptional merit of the works of St. Francis de Sales. One of their best authors* thus appreciates the writings of the blessed Bishop of Geneva:—"From its first appearance, the *Introduction to a Devout Life* had a universal success in France, and editions succeeded one another rapidly. This was an event of great consequence in regard to such a book, and Catholicism could most justly rejoice at it. The learned controversies of Bellarmine had been of far less advantage: they had indeed fitted for theological discussion a clergy who found themselves face to face with superior forces; but from the first blow, the *Introduction* could make conquests to a religion whose practices were presented under forms so

* *History of French Literature.* By M. Sayous.

amiable, and even so delightful. * * * Among Calvinistic gentlemen solicited to abjure their faith, the little book served as an occasion for more than one renunciation. In this respect, the *Introduction to a Devout Life* was, in the beginning of the century, what the *Exposition of the Catholic Faith* was in the middle, and had effects quite similar. Of all that St. Francis de Sales has written, his *Letters* are the most widely spread: Protestants read them after a selection, for all would not suit their taste; but in each class, the amiable and glowing piety, the grace—what shall I say? the wit, the familiar gossip, with which the Bishop allows his pen to twirl along, have a singular charm; and never does the afflicted or dejected heart disdain the consolation and encouragement which it finds in perusing them.”

It is in his correspondence that we must study the great, the holy Bishop of Geneva; there we shall find humility unparalleled, a joyous cordiality, peace unutterable, the sole desire of accomplishing the will of God.

There we shall find that elegance, ever new, in thought and in expression; that richness of beautiful images and of fine comparisons borrowed from things most familiar: the rose, the pigeon, the halcyon, the bee, the odorous plants of Arabia, that dove-like simplicity, that child-like candour which doe not,

however, exclude, on due occasions, a manly strength and energy; that chaste tenderness which could only come from Heaven; that gentle meekness which holds the key of every heart.

We shall be the less surprised at the eulogies given to the writings of St. Francis de Sales by the most experienced doctors and the most eminent personages, when we consider with what maturity and wisdom they were composed. Those beautiful pages, which seem to flow as from a well, so free and natural are the doctrine and the style, are the fruit of the most serious study and the most assiduous meditation, joined with a great knowledge of the human heart, which he had acquired in the direction of souls.*

His beautiful *Treatise on the Love of God* is the result of twenty-four years' preaching, according to the statement of the author himself, and the fruit of such profound study, that there are fourteen lines in it, which, as he told Mgr. Camus, Bishop of Belley, had cost him the reading of more than twelve hundred pages in folio.† After this, we should not

* *Spirit of St. Francis de Sales.*

† It is related that the publisher, in gratitude for the considerable gain he had derived from the sale of the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, made a journey to Annecy expressly to offer

be surprised at the unexampled success which has crowned the writings of St. Francis de Sales. The *Treatise on the Love of God* is a most beautiful book, and one that has had a great circulation. All the agitations, all the inconsistencies of the human heart are painted in it with inimitable art. We behold there the exercises of love, contemplation, the repose of the soul in God, its languors, its transports, its dereliction, its dying sadness, its return to courage, the abandonment of the docile spirit to the secret ways of Providence. When the *Introduction to a Devout Life* appeared in the world, it created an extraordinary sensation; every one wished to procure it, to read it, and, having read it, to read it again. Very soon it was translated into nearly all the languages of Europe, and editions succeeded one another so rapidly that in 1656 it had reached the fortieth. Henry IV., on reading it, declared that the work far surpassed his expectations; Mary of Medici, his wife, sent it bound in diamonds and precious stones to James, King of England, and this monarch, one of the most learned who ever occupied a throne, conceived such an esteem for it, that, notwithstanding his schismatical and spiteful prejudices as a gift to the author a sum of four hundred crowns of gold. (*Memoirs of the Academic Society of Savoy*, vol. ii.)

dices against Catholic writers, he carried it always about with him and often read it. Many times he was heard to say:—"Oh, how I should wish to know the author! He is certainly a great man, and among all our bishops there is not one capable of writing in this manner, which breathes of heaven and the angels." The general of the Feuillants, speaking of this work, calls it the most perfect book that mortal hand ever composed, a book that one would always wish to read again after having read it many times, and he adds this beautiful eulogium, that in reading it he who would not be a Christian should become better, and he who would be better should become perfect.*

The Church, directed by the Holy Spirit, exhorts all her children to be guided by the counsels of St. Francis de Sales. *Admonished by his directions*, she says in his Office. She assures us that his works have diffused a bright light amongst the faithful, to whom they point out a way as sure as it is easy, to arrive at perfection.

We could, if our design permitted it, multiply evidence in favour of the works of St. Francis de Sales. We shall terminate this introduction by some extracts from a letter of Pope Alexander VII., one of the

* *Life of St. Francis de Sales*, by M. the Abbé Hamon.

greatest of his panegyrists:—"I conjure you anew to make the works of M. de Sales your delight and your dearest study. I have read them I cannot tell how many times, and I would not dispense myself from reading them again; they never lose the charm of novelty; they always seem to me to say something more than they had said before. If you trust me, these writings should be the mirror of your life, and the rule by which to form your every action and your every thought. As for me, I confess to you that from often reading them I have become like a repository of his most beautiful sentiments and the principal points of his doctrine, that I ruminate over them at my leisure, that I taste them, and that I make them, so to speak, pass into my very blood and substance. Such is my opinion of this great saint: exhorting you with all my heart to follow him."

If in gathering these lovely flowers and binding them into bunches, we have lessened their beauty or their perfume, we trust that still they will at least a little serve those severely tried souls for whom we intend them; we shall consider it an ample recompense for all our trouble, if, even in a single heart, they increase confidence in God, and the desire to love and serve Him generously.

"Most holy Mother of God! the most lovable, the

most loving, and the most loved, of creatures! prostrate at thy feet, I dedicate and consecrate to thee this little work of love, in honour of the immense greatness of thy love. O Jesus! to whom could I more fitly offer these words of Thy love than to the most amiable heart of the well-beloved of Thy soul?"*

* Dedication of the *Treatise on the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS.

FIRST BOOK.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON GOD, PROVIDENCE, THE SAINTS,
ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE INCLINATION WHICH GOD HAS TO DO US GOOD.

As soon as man thinks attentively on the Divinity, he perceives a certain sweet emotion of heart which testifies that God is the God of the human heart; and never does our understanding experience more pleasure than in this thought of the Divinity, the least knowledge of which, as the prince of the philosophers says, is more precious than the greatest of all things else: as the least ray of the sun is brighter than the brightest of the moon or of the stars, yea, is more luminous than the moon and stars together. And if any accident surprises our heart, immediately it has recourse to the Divinity, acknowledging that when the world looks dark, It alone is good, and when danger threatens, It alone can save and preserve.

This pleasure, this confidence, which the human heart naturally takes in God, can only proceed from the conformity that exists between the divine goodness and the soul. There is a great, but secret, resemblance between them—a resemblance that cannot be denied, yet cannot be understood. We are created to the image of God, we have a close connexion with His Divine Majesty.

Besides this conformity, there is a constant intercourse between God and man for their reciprocal perfection. Not that God can receive any perfection from man, but because as man can be perfected only by the divine goodness, so the divine goodness can nowhere out of itself be so well displayed as in regard to our humanity. The one has great need and capacity to receive, the other great abundance and inclination to bestow. Nothing is more suited to indigence than affluence, and the kinder affluence is the stronger its inclination to give. The more needy indigence is, the more eager it is to be satiated. The meeting then of affluence and indigence is sweet and happy; and we could scarcely say which should enjoy the more contentment, abundance to be communicated, or deficiency to be filled, had not our Lord told us that it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive. But where there is more of happiness, there is more of satisfaction; the divine goodness, then, has greater pleasure in giving its graces, than we have in receiving them.

Mothers have sometimes their paps so full that they cannot refrain from presenting them to an infant; and while one takes the breast with avidity, the other yields it yet more willingly; the infant drinking,

pressed by its necessity, and the mother supplying drink, pressed by her fecundity.*

Thus our deficiency has need of the divine abundance through the misery of its dearth, but the divine affluence has no need of our indigence, unless through the perfection of its goodness: a goodness which, nevertheless, does not become better by being communicated, for it acquires nothing by expending itself; but our indigence would remain failing, if the abundance of the divine goodness did not succour it.

Has not our soul then—considering that nothing can perfectly content it, that its capacity cannot be filled by any thing in this world, that its understanding has an infinite longing after more extensive knowledge, and its will an insatiable desire to find and love what is good—has it not reason to exclaim: Ah! I am not made for this world! There is some

* “To make you better understand by sound doctrine how immense is the mercy of Our Lord, I beg you to consider a truth which I have taken from Tertullian. This great man teaches us that God begins His works by an outpouring of His goodness on all His creatures, and that His first inclination is to do us good. And, indeed, it appears to me that the reason is quite evident; for, to know well what the first inclination is, we must select that which should be the most natural, inasmuch as nature is the root of all. But is there anything more natural in our God, than to enrich us with the profusion of His graces?”

“As a fountain sends out its waters naturally, as the sun sends forth its rays naturally, so God does good naturally: being good and abounding in riches by His natural condition, He should also be by nature liberal and beneficent. When He punishes you, O wicked man! the reason is not in Himself; He does not wish that any person should perish; it is your malice, your ingratitude, that draws down His indignation upon your head.”—*Bossuet*.

sovereign good on which I depend, some infinite Creator who has placed within me this boundless desire of knowing and this hunger which cannot be satisfied. It is therefore necessary that I should tend forward and stretch out towards Him in order to be united to His goodness, to which I belong. Such is the conformity that we have with God.

CHAPTER II.

THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD FOR US.

CONSIDER the eternal love which God has borne towards you; for already, long before Jesus Christ had suffered for you on the cross as Man, His Divine Majesty destined you to life, and loved you infinitely. But when did He begin to love you? When He began to be God. And when did He begin to be God? Never; He has always been, without beginning and without end; and thus He has always loved you, and it is from all eternity that His love prepared for you the graces and favours which He has given you. He says by the prophet: *I have loved thee* (speaking to you as to every one else) *with an everlasting love, and I have mercifully drawn thee to me.* Among other things, He has thought of making you take good resolutions to love and serve Him.*

* "The divine goodness and justice are like two arms to God; but goodness is the right arm, which begins and accomplishes almost every thing, and which He wishes to appear in all His works. If men allowed it to guide them, it would load them with benefits in keeping with its munificence.

Oh! how amiable is this great God who, of His infinite goodness, has given His Son as a redemption for the whole world! Yes, alas! for all in general, but still in particular for me, *who am the chief of sinners*. Ah! *He loved me*; I say, He loved me, me, that is myself, such as I am, *and delivered Himself* to His passion *for me*.

We must consider the divine benefits in their first and eternal origin. O God! my Theotime, how can we have worthy or sufficient love for the infinite goodness of our Creator, who, from all eternity designed to create us, to preserve, govern, redeem, save, and glorify, all in general, and each one of us in particular? Who was I when I was not, I, I say, who, being now something, am nothing but a mere contemptible worm of the earth? And yet God, from the abyss of His eternity, *thought thoughts* of benediction on me. Thus He meditated and appointed the hour of my birth, of my baptism, of all the inspirations which He would give me, and in a word of all the benefits which He would bestow upon and offer me.* Alas! is there any sweetness like this sweetness?

There is a sort of division between goodness and justice: all beginnings belong to goodness; thus all things in their first institution are very good. Justice extends only to what is added, which is sin. But there is this difference, that justice never takes anything from the rights of goodness. On the contrary, goodness sometimes anticipates those of justice; for, by pardon, it is exercised upon sins, which are the proper matter for justice."—*Bossuet*.

* "Goodness is united in God to omnipotence; this is a truth often repeated in the prayers of the holy liturgy:—'Lord! thou art good and all-powerful.' So long as the soul is not well convinced of this union of goodness and power in

In its love and mercy the divine goodness prepared all means, general and particular, for our salvation. Yes, indeed, as a mother prepares the cradle, the linens, the swathing-bands, and even a nourishment, for the infant to which she is about to give birth, so Our Lord, in the desire of bringing us forth to salvation and of making us His children, prepared on the tree of the cross all that was requisite for us: our spiritual cradle, our linens, our swathing-bands, our nourishment, and all else that was necessary for us. These are the means, the attractions, the graces, by which He conducts our souls and draws them to His perfection.

We must consider the divine benefits in their second meritorious source; for do you not know, Theotime, that the high-priest of the law carried on his shoulders and breast the names of the children of Israel, that is to say, precious stones on which the names of the chiefs of Israel were engraved? Behold Jesus, our great *Bishop*, and look upon Him from the moment of His conception; consider that He carries us on His shoulders, accepting the charge of redeeming us by His death, *even the death of the cross*. O Theotime, Theotime! this soul of the Saviour knew us all by our name and our surname; but, above all, on the day of His Passion, when He offered His tears, His prayers, His blood, and His life for us all, He darted forth in particular for you these thoughts of love. "Alas! O my eternal Father,

God, it has only half-strength, half-love, an imperfect idea of the divine succour, from which we should expect all things. Yet a faith that fears nothing is necessary for souls who desire courageously to imitate Jesus Christ; let them learn, therefore, how to hope for everything."—*Pere De Ravignan*.

I take upon Me and charge myself with all the sins of poor Theotime, to suffer torments and death, that he may be acquitted of them, and that he may not perish, but may live. May I die, provided he lives! may I be crucified, provided he be glorified! O sovereign love of the Heart of Jesus, what heart can ever praise thee sufficiently?"

Thus, within His breast, maternal breast, the divine heart foresaw, arranged, merited, and impetrated, all the blessings we possess, not only in general for all, but in particular for each one; and His paps of sweetness prepared for us the milk of His motions, His inspirations, and His sweetnesses, by which He draws, conducts, and nourishes our souls to eternal life. Benefits will not affect us, if we do not regard the eternal will that destined them, and the Heart of the Saviour that merited them for us by so many pains, especially during His passion and death.

The divine love, seated on the Heart of the Saviour, as on a royal throne, beholds through the window of His pierced side all the hearts of the children of men; for Our Lord, being the King of Hearts, keeps His eyes always fixed on hearts. But as those who look through lattices see and are not seen, so the divine love of this Heart, or rather the Heart of this divine love, always sees ours clearly, but we do not see it, we only get a glimpse of it. For, O God! if we were to see it as it is, we should die of love for it.

Adore its sovereign goodness, which from all eternity named you by your name, and designed to save you, destining for you amid a variety of things the present day, that on it you might perform works

of piety and salvation, according to what has been said by the prophet:—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee."

On account of this thought, you ought to unite your will with that of our most benign and merciful heavenly Father, in these or such like words, cordially uttered: O most sweet will of my God, be ever done! O eternal designs of the will of my God, I adore you, and consecrate and dedicate to you my will, to will eternally what you have eternally willed! Oh! may I then do this day, and always, and in all things, Thy divine will, my sweet Creator! Yes, heavenly Father! for such has been Thy pleasure from all eternity. Amen. O most agreeable goodness, may it be as thou hast willed! O eternal will, live and reign in my will for ever.

O God! what resolutions are like those on which God has thought and meditated from all eternity! How dear and precious they should be to us! how much we ought to suffer rather than lose any of them! No, indeed, we ought not to lose any of them, though the whole world should perish; for all the world together is not worth one soul, and our soul is worth nothing without its resolutions.

O dear resolutions, you are the beautiful tree of life which God has planted with His hand in the midst of my heart, and which my Saviour wishes to water with His blood to make it fructify; I prefer a thousand deaths rather than permit any one to root you up. No, neither vanity, nor delights, nor tribulations shall ever make me change my intentions.

Ah! Lord, Thou hast planted this beautiful tree, after having kept it eternally in Thy paternal bosom,

to transfer it at length into my garden. How many souls there are that have not been so favoured! and how can I humble myself sufficiently under the hand of Thy mercy?

O beautiful and holy resolutions, if I preserve you, you will preserve me; if you live in my soul, my soul will live in you. Live then for ever in me, as you have been eternally in the mercy of God; and may I be ever faithful to you!

CHAPTER III.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD, FOUNDED ON THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR OWN MISERY.

Not only can the soul that knows its misery have a great confidence in God, but it cannot have a true confidence unless it has a knowledge of its misery; for this knowledge and confession of our misery introduces us to God. Thus all the great saints, Job, David, and the rest, began their prayers by the acknowledgment of their misery and unworthiness; so that it is a most excellent thing to own one's self poor, vile, abject, and unworthy of appearing in the presence of God. That celebrated expression among the ancients, *Know thyself*, while it refers to the knowledge of the grandeur and excellence of the soul, not to be degraded and profaned with things unworthy of its nobility, refers no less to the knowledge of our unworthiness, imperfection, and misery; inasmuch as the more miserable we recognise ourselves to be, the more we should confide in the goodness and mercy of God. For between mercy and misery

there is a connexion so close that one cannot be exercised without the other. If God had not created man, He would have truly been all-good, but He would not have been actually merciful, because mercy is exercised only towards the miserable. You see then that the more miserable we know ourselves to be, the more occasion we have to confide in God, since we have nothing in ourselves in which to confide. Diffidence in ourselves proceeds from knowledge of our imperfections. It is very good to diffide in ourselves, but what will it avail, unless we cast all our confidence on God, and expect His mercy?

Do you know that you are a poor little creature? Love to be such, glory in not being anything; be quite at ease, since your misery will serve as an object for the goodness of God to exercise His mercy upon.

Among the poor, those who are the most miserable, and whose maladies are greatest and most affecting, are considered the luckiest of the poor, and the most proper to obtain alms. We are only beggars, the most miserable are in the best condition, and the mercy of God regards them the more willingly.

Let us humble ourselves, I beseech you, and preach only our sores at the gate of the temple of divine piety. But remember to preach them with joy, con-
woling yourself to be all emptiness, that God may fill you with His kingdom. Be sweet and affable with every one, except with those who would wish to take away your glory, which is your misery. *I glory in my infirmities*, says the apostle (II. Cor. xii. 9.) And: *It is more advantageous for me to die* (Phil. i. 21) than to lose my glory. Do you see?

He preferred to die rather than to lose his infirmities, which were his glory.*

You must guard well your misery, your baseness, for God regards it as He regarded that of the Sacred Virgin (Luke, i. 48). *Men behold the exterior, but God beholds the heart* (1 Kings, xvi. 7). If He sees humility in our soul, He will bestow great graces upon us.

Let your heart then be full of courage, and your courage of confidence in God, for He who gave you the first attractions of His love will never abandon you, if you do not abandon Him: which I beseech you, with all my heart, not to do.

CHAPTER IV.

GOD HAS GIVEN US EVERY THING WITH HIS
DIVINE SON.

GREAT indeed was the gift which the Eternal Father made to the world, when He bestowed upon it His own Son, as our Lord Himself says:—"God so loved the world, that He gave it His only begotten Son." How then (says the great Apostle St. Paul) has He not given us every other gift with Him?

You remember well, I am sure, the beautiful

* "God does not raise unjust reflections. Even when He shows us our faults, He represents them to us with sweetness; He condemns and consoles us at the same time, He humbles without troubling us, and turns us against ourselves in such a manner, that, while confused at our misery, we are replenished with peace. The Lord is not in the whirlwind."—*Fenelon.*

history of the holy patriarch Joseph, which has already been so often told, but which can never be too much considered: being viceroy of Egypt, his brothers, who dwelt in Messopotamia, came suppliantly to him, in order to be assisted by him, in the extreme necessity to which their good father Jacob and they had been reduced, in consequence of the famine which desolated their country; you know also how kindly he sent them back to their father, laden with wheat. But when they brought him little Benjamin, he sent them back, not as on the previous occasion, laden with grain and provisions given only by measure, but also accompanied them with the richest gifts, and with waggons filled with all they could desire. In the same manner, we see the Eternal Father acts towards us; for although, in the old law, He made very great presents to His people, yet they were always made by measure; on the contrary, in the new law, from the moment of beholding His dear Benjamin, that is to say, Our Lord, re-enter into His glory, He has opened His most liberal hand to pour forth His gifts and graces on all the faithful most abundantly, as He had said by the prophet Joël: that He would pour out His Holy Spirit on all flesh, that is to say, on all men, and not merely on the Apostles.

Besides, you know what Isaiah says of Our Lord, that He should receive infinite graces, and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit would rest upon His head. "And the Spirit of the Lord," he says, "will rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety, and he shall be filled with the fear of the Lord." But why does the prophet say

that all these gifts would rest upon Our Lord, since He neither had nor could have any need for them, being the very source of grace Himself? Merely to make us understand that all graces and celestial benedictions should be distributed by Him who is our head, allowing them to flow down on us who are His members, I mean to say, children of the holy Church, of which He is the Head; and in proof of this truth, hear what He says in the Cantic of Canticles to His Beloved:—"Open to me, my spouse, my sister." He calls her spouse, on account of the greatness of His love, and sister, to testify the purity and sincerity of this love. Open to Me, He says to her, but open to Me quickly; for My head is full of dew, and My locks of the drops of the night. Now, the dew and the drops of the night are but one and the same thing. What do you think, then, does this Well-beloved of our souls mean to say, unless that He ardently desires His beloved to open the door of her heart quickly to Him, in order that He may be able to pour out His sacred gifts and the graces which He has received most abundantly from His Eternal Father, as a dew and most precious liquor, of which He wishes to make her a present?

It is a thing most certain, and one which ought to greatly console us, that Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Master, in all the rigour of justice, and with a just price, paid and made satisfaction to God His Father for all the punishment that we have merited by our sins, and not only for all ours, but for all those of the whole world. This is what the great Doctor of the Gentiles declares to the Romans, saying that where sin had abounded, grace superabounded; he had there, he meant to say, sins in abundance.

but graces in superabundance, and by grace we are to understand satisfaction.

Our Saviour, seeing that the Divine Majesty of His Father had the interests of human nature extremely at heart, without inquiring of the price, or of any other thing, at the very first, in order to redeem us, presented, with a most pure and liberal affection, a ransom which neither we nor the angels could procure, a satisfaction much greater than all that the sins of the world could require; whence St. Paul says: You are bought with a great price; the price indeed is great, and in harmony with the excellence of the thing. A great deposit was that, by which Our Lord lodged in the hands of the paternal Justice, all His precious blood, of which the least drop is far more valuable than all the worlds we could ever imagine.

It is no wonder, then, that Our Lord, having made such a payment, should destroy the decree by which we were delivered over to the hands of the devil, remarks the great Apostle.

But, I beg of you, listen for a little to the theological reason of this. Satisfaction is so much the greater and more valuable as the person who makes it is great, distinguished, and of more merit. Example: if I have received an injury from a prince, and he sends me a foot-boy in order to be reconciled with me and to make me satisfaction, this is not a great honour; but if he sends me his own son, who makes me satisfaction, and begs me to be no longer offended, this is a great honour, this satisfaction is greater than the injury could have been. And, in truth, how is satisfaction to be made for honour, unless by rendering honour? / But honour

is greater in proportion as he who renders it is more exalted; for the least honour that a prince renders is worth incomparably more than all the honours that a man of low condition could render: so much does honour depend on him who gives it.

Let us then say: if honour is so much the greater as he who renders it is the more dignified, if satisfaction is so much the greater as he who makes it is the more exalted, what must be the satisfaction of Him who is infinitely great? The honour rendered and the satisfaction made by a personage of infinite perfection cannot but be infinite. Let us now see where we are. Our Lord was an infinite being; He satisfied for us, His satisfaction was infinite. Oh! then, how well could David say: In Our Lord there is great mercy, and a satisfaction ample and excellent! God, truly infinite, had been offended, Jesus Christ, truly infinite, satisfied; man had been elevated by pride against God Himself, Our Lord was humbled under every creature.

Understand this well: being equal to His Father, He humbled and annihilated Himself, even unto death, which is nothing else than a kind of total privation, and therefore God His Father gave Him a name which is above all names, the name of Jesus, which signifies Saviour, as if He had said: He is justly Saviour, who, being infinite, has paid the debt in all its rigour, with an infinite satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN HIS INCARNATION.

THE love of God is always inseparably united with the love of the neighbour, and according as we love God, we likewise love our neighbour; hence, the love of Jesus Christ towards His Father being infinite, His love towards men is likewise infinite. To give some certain proofs of it:—

From the moment of His holy conception, He loved us with a marvellous love of complacency; for His delights were to be with the children of men and to draw man to Him, becoming man Himself, in order that in His humanity we might be able to approach and see Him with our eyes in heaven, and by faith, here on earth, in the divine sacrament of the Eucharist. He loved us with a love of benevolence, giving His own divinity to man, in such a manner that man became God; He united Himself to us by an incomprehensible junction, in which He adhered and was pressed to our nature so powerfully, indissolubly, and indescribably, that never was anything so closely joined and pressed to humanity as is now the most holy divinity in the person of the Son of God. He poured Himself entirely into us, and, so to speak, dissolved His greatness in order to reduce it to our littleness: whence He is called the fountain of living water, the rain and dew of heaven. He annihilated Himself, St. Paul says, to arrive at our humanity, to replenish us with His divinity, to

overwhelm us with His goodness, to elevate us to His dignity, and to bestow on us the divine existence of children of God; He who dwelt in Himself, wishing to dwell henceforward in us; He who was living during ages of ages in the bosom of His Eternal Father, desiring to be made mortal in the womb of His temporal Mother; He who had always been God, becoming man for eternity. Ah! how beautiful to look upon Him, a little infant for us! Certainly we ought with a hundred thousand times more contentment see this dear little infant lying in the crib, than all the potentates of the world sitting on their thrones. This amiable condition of a little infant excites us to love him confidently, and to confide ourselves lovingly to Him in whom we find all. His poverty and His silence in the manger tell us much greater things than any human eloquence could, and raise within our hearts many holy sentiments and affections, above all, a perfect renunciation of the goods and pomps of this world.

I do not find any other mystery which so happily blends tenderness with austerity, love with rigour, and sweetness with severity.

Let us remain at the feet of this Saviour, saying with the spouse in the Canticles:—"I have found Him whom my soul loveth, I will hold Him, and will not let Him go." The Infant in the crib does not say a word, and His heart, full of ardour for ours, is manifested only by sighs, tears, and sweet glances; but what great things does this silence say to me!

It teaches me to make true mental prayer; it shows me the loving fervour of a heart full of good

thoughts, of holy affections: a heart that is afraid to lose their sweetness by expressing them.*

During His mortal life, the sweet Jesus never heaved a single sigh towards His Father, in which we had not a share, or entertained a single thought, which was not for our happiness. Though we were iron through hardness, or straw through weakness, we ought to love Him; He is a divine magnet that attracts iron, a celestial amber that attracts straw; in a word, He is the centre of all hearts.

Pronounce often from the depth of your heart the sacred name of the Saviour: it will shed a delicious balm through all the powers of your soul. How happy we should be to have nothing in the understanding but Jesus, in the will but Jesus, in the imagination but Jesus! Let us try and pronounce it often and devoutly. May this divine Infant be pleased to bathe our hearts in His blood and to anoint them with His holy name, in order that the good desires which we conceive may be all purpled and perfumed therewith! Let us a thousand times kiss the feet of this Saviour, and say to Him: my heart, O my God, desires Thee, my eyes seek Thee out, I sigh for Thy countenance; that is, let us keep

* "Why, then, be afraid? O man, why so much dread the face of God? Is it because He comes? He comes indeed; but it is to save, not to judge, the earth. And that you may not have reason to say as formerly: *I heard thy voice and hid myself*; here He has become an infant, and without a voice; for the wailings of infancy inspire less of fear than of compassion. He has become, I say, a little infant; a virgin, His mother, binds his tender limbs, and will you still be afraid? And even if a little infant should be feared, a little would suffice to appease it: for every one knows that an infant is easily satisfied."—*St. Bernard*.

our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ to consider Him, our mouth ever ready to praise Him, our whole being athirst to be agreeable to Him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN HIS PASSION.

THE Eternal Father so loved the world that He gave it His only Son, and the Son so loved the will of His Father, who desired the salvation of human nature, that, without taking into account the meanness or contemptibleness of the thing, He willingly offered a prodigious price for its ransom, namely, His blood, His toils, and His life.

Thus Our Saviour, through love, devoted Himself to the will of His Father and to the redemption of the world. He advanced in every mystery of His passion, saying: O my Father, this loved human nature would be sufficiently redeemed by one of my tears, but that would not suffice for the reverence which I owe to Thy will and to my love. I wish, besides my agony in the Garden of Olives, to be scourged, to be crowned with thorns, to have my body reduced to ruins, and to become as a leper, without form or beauty.

Thus the sweet Jesus was scourged, crowned, condemned, mocked, and rejected as man, devoted, destined, and dedicated to carry out and endure the opprobriums and ignominies due in punishment to all sins, and He served as a general sacrifice for sin, being made as it were an anathema, separated from and abandoned by His Eternal Father.

The divine Saviour wished to die in the flames of love, because of the infinite charity He bore towards us, and by the force and power of love; that is to say, He would die in love, by love, for love, and of love. This is what He Himself says: *No one takes away my life, but I lay it down of myself, for I have power to lay it down and to take it up again.*—*He was offered*, says Isaias, *because He wished it.* His body being by right immortal and impassible, on account of the glory of His soul, He rendered it, through love and by a miracle, mortal and passible. He wished, even after His death, to have His side opened, that we might see the thoughts of His heart, which were all thoughts of love, and that we might go to Him with confidence, in order to hide ourselves in His side, and to receive from Him an abundance of graces and benedictions. In this manner, from the first moment of His life until the present hour, has the kind Jesus been continually drawing arrows, if we may so speak, from the quiver of His love, with which to wound the souls of His lovers, showing them clearly that they can never love Him near so much as He deserves. My God, could He show more love to sinners than to become a perfect holocaust for their sins? Ah! if we could see the Heart of Jesus such as it is, we should die of love for Him, since we are mortal, as He died of love for us, while He was mortal, and as He would die again, if He were not now immortal. Nothing has so much power to wound a loving heart as to see another heart wounded for love of it. Oh! that Our Lord would change hearts with us, as He did with St. Catherine of Sienna, in such a manner that we might have no other heart but His, no other will

but His, no other affection or desire but to love Him and to be wholly His.

The pelican, seeing its little one stung by serpents, wounds them on all sides with the point of its bill, in order that the venom imparted to the body by the serpents may be extracted with their blood, but seeing them die, it wounds itself, and pours out its blood upon them, as if to vivify them with a new life. Its love wounds them, and suddenly, through this same love, it wounds itself. Bees never wound, without being wounded to death.

Seeing then the Saviour of our souls wounded with love for us, even to death and the death of the cross, shall not we be wounded with love for Him, and with a wound most lovingly dolorous? Never, indeed, can we love Him so much as His love and His death deserve.

Ah! if my soul is the spouse of Jesus crucified and suffering, I ought, during my whole life, to regard it as a great favour to wear His livery, that is to say, the nails, the thorns, and the lance. Remember, my soul, that the banquet of His nuptials is prepared of gall and vinegar; seek not for pleasure or joy in this world. It is too great an honour, O King of Glory, to drink with Thee the chalice of sorrow; may it never happen to me to refuse this draught, because, O God, says David, it is the beverage of thy beloved!

The image of Jesus Christ bruised, wounded, pierced, crushed, crucified, has always been a beautiful mirror of love, into which the angels and saints could never cease to gaze, enraptured with sweetness and overflowing with consolation. And if the picture of Abraham, wielding the sword of death over his

dear and only son, had power to make the great St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, weep as often as he contemplated it, how much more ought the image of Our Lord, sacrificing Himself on the cross, to move us: a sacrifice which is the source of all the graces we have ever received, and of all our holy resolutions, in such a manner that through it alone we preserve, fortify, and accomplish them?

Since, then, Our Lord has so much loved us, that He has equally redeemed all, bedewed us with His divine blood, and called us to Himself, without excluding any one; since He has become all ours, to make us all His, giving us His death and His life to deliver us from eternal death and to procure us the joys of eternal life, that we may belong to Him in this mortal life and yet more perfectly in the next: what remains, what conclusion have we to draw, unless that living we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus Christ who died for us; that is, we should consecrate to Him every moment of our life, referring to His glory our works, our thoughts, and our affections?

My soul, live henceforward amid the scourges and the thorns of thy Saviour, and there, as a nightingale in its bush, sing sweetly: Live Jesus, who didst die that my soul might live! Ah! Eternal Father, what can the world return Thee for the present Thou hast made it of Thy only Son? Alas! to redeem a thing so vile as I, the Saviour delivered Himself to death, and, unhappy me! I hesitate to surrender my nothingness to Him who has given me every thing.

CHAPTER VII.

ABUNDANCE OF OUR REDEMPTION.

God clearly foresaw that the first man would abuse his liberty, and that forsaking grace he would lose glory, but He did not wish to treat human nature so rigorously as He decreed to treat the angelic.

It was of human nature He had determined to take a blessed piece, to unite it to His divinity. He saw that it was a feeble nature, *a wind which passeth and returneth not*, that is to say, which is dissipated as it goes. He had regard to the surprise of the assault which the malicious and perverse Satan made on the first man, and to the greatness of the temptation which ruined him. He saw that the whole race of men would perish by the fault of a single one. For these reasons, He looked upon our nature in pity, and resolved to receive it to mercy.

The devil had taken us away from our natural Lord, and though he had no title to us, yet our Lord redeemed us, redeemed what was His own, to make us more His own, if more His own we could be. St. Paul says: *you are bought with a great price; what is this price? He redeemed us with the blood of the Lamb*; He pardoned not His own Son, but delivered Him to death for us.

That the sweetness of His mercy might be adorned by the beauty of His justice, He resolved to save man by means of a rigorous redemption, which no one being able to make except His own Son, He

appointed that He should redeem men, not merely by one of His loving actions, which would have been more than sufficient to redeem a thousand millions of worlds, but by all the innumerable loving actions and dolorous sufferings He would perform and endure even to death, and the death of the cross, to which He destined Him, wishing that thus He should become the companion of our miseries in order to make us the companions of His glory hereafter, showing in this manner the riches of His goodness by a *redemption, copious, abundant, magnificent, and excessive*, which acquired, and, as it were, reconquered for us all the means necessary to attain to glory; so that no person can ever complain as if the divine mercy were wanting to him.

The least drop of Our Lord's blood was of infinitely more value than we, and nevertheless, to make us more His own, He wished to shed it all.

Who will doubt the abundance of our means of salvation, since we have so great a Saviour, in consideration of whom we have been created, and by the merits of whom we have been redeemed? For He died for all, because all were dead, and His mercy has been more salutary to redeem the race of man, than the misfortune of Adam was venomous to destroy. And so far from the sin of Adam having exceeded, it has on the contrary rather excited, the divine goodness, which, by a sweet and loving contention, being invigorated by the presence of its adversary, and massing, as it were, all its forces for victory, has made *grace superabound where iniquity had abounded*; so that holy Church, in an excess of admiration, cries out on the eve of Easter: O truly necessary sin of Adam, which has been blotted out

by the death of Jesus Christ! O happy fault, which merited such and so great a Redeemer! Certainly we can say with one of the ancients: we were lost, if we had not been lost; that is to say, our loss has been to our gain, since, in fact, human nature has received more graces by the redemption of its Saviour, than it would ever have received by the innocence of Adam, if he had persevered in it.

Though the divine Providence has left in man, along with the grace of its mercy, several striking marks of its severity, such as, for example, the necessity of death, the pains of sickness, the obligation of labour, the rebellion of sensuality, yet the celestial clemency, rising above these, takes pleasure in turning every misery to the greater advantage of those who love it, making patience spring up from labour, contempt of the world from the necessity of death, and a thousand victories from concupiscence; and, as the rainbow touching the thorny aspalathus renders it more odorous than the lily, so the redemption of Our Lord touching our miseries, renders them more useful and more amiable than original innocence would ever have been.

The angels have more joy in heaven, says the Saviour, for one sinner that does penance, than for ninety-nine just who need not penance. And in like manner, the state of redemption is a hundred times better than that of innocence. Through the sprinkling of the blood of Our Lord, made with the hyssop of the cross, we have been restored to a whiteness incomparably more excellent than that of the snow of innocence: coming forth, like Naaman, from the river of salvation, purer and cleaner than if we had never been defiled, in order that the Divine Majesty *might not*

be overcome by evil, but might overcome evil with good, and that His mercies might be exalted over all His works.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR LORD PRACTISED ALL THE MOST EXCELLENT
KINDS OF LOVE.

1. HE loved us with a love of complacency, for *His delights were to be with the children of men*, and to draw man to Him, becoming man Himself.

2. He loved us with a love of benevolence, pouring His own divinity into man, in such a manner that man was made God.

3. He united Himself to us by a union so close and incomprehensible, that nothing was ever so closely united as the most holy divinity and humanity are now in the person of Our Lord.

4. He dissolved, as it were, His greatness, to reduce it to the form and figure of our littleness; whence He is called the fountain of living water, the rain and dew of heaven.

5. He fell into an ecstasy, not only, as St. Denis says, because, through the excess of His loving goodness, He became in a manner out of Himself, extending His Providence to all things, and finding Himself in all; but also because, as St. Paul says, He quitted Himself, emptied Himself, laid aside His glory and grandeur, descended from the throne of His incomprehensible majesty, and, so to speak, *annihilated Himself*, in order to arrive at our humanity, to replenish us with His divinity, to overwhelm us with

His goodness, to elevate us to His dignity, and to bestow on us the divine existence of children of God; and that expression which has been so often used: *I live, saith the Lord*, He has been able to repeat in the language of His Apostle: *I live, now not I, but man liveth in me; my life is man, and to die for man is my gain; my life is hidden with man in God.* He who dwelt in Himself wishes henceforward to dwell in us; He who had lived from unbeginning ages in the bosom of His Eternal Father becomes mortal in the womb of His temporal Mother; He who had eternally been God becomes Man for eternity; to such a degree has God been ravished and drawn into an ecstasy, through love for man.

6. He loved us to admiration, as shown in the cases of the Centurion and the Canaanean woman.

7. He lovingly contemplated the young man who had observed the commandments from his youth, and desired to know the way to perfection.

8. He took a loving rest among us, and sometimes with suspension of the senses, as in the womb of His Mother, and during His infancy.

9. He had tendernesses towards little children, whom He took in His arms and lovingly caressed, towards Martha and Magdalen, towards Lazarus over whom He wept, as also over the city of Jerusalem.

10. He was animated with an extraordinary zeal, which, as St. Denis says, made Him jealous: turning away, as far as lay in Him, all evil from His loved human nature, even at the risk and peril of His own life; banishing the devil, the prince of this world, who appeared as His rival and competitor.

11. He had a thousand thousand loving languors; from which proceeded those divine words: *I have a*

baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how I am straitened until it be accomplished! He foresaw the hour of being baptized in His own blood, and languished for its arrival, the love He bore us pressing Him to see us delivered by His death from eternal death. Thus He was sorrowful even to a bloody sweat in the Garden of Olives, not only through the bitter grief He felt in the inferior part of His soul, but also through the immense love He bore us in the rational part: the one giving Him a horror of death, the other an extreme desire of it: so that between this horror and this desire He suffered a most cruel agony, even to a great *effusion of blood*, which flowed as from a fountain, *trickling down upon the ground*.

12. Finally, this divine lover died in the midst of the flames of holy love, because of the infinite charity He bore towards us, and by the force and efficacy of love, that is to say, He died in love, by love, for love, and of love. For, though the cruel torments were more than sufficient to cause the death of any one, yet death could not enter into the life of Him who *held the keys of life and death*, unless divine love had first opened the gates to death, allowing it to enter and to plunder His divine body of life: love not being content with having made Him mortal for us, if it did not also see Him die. It was by election, and not by compulsion, that He died. *No one taketh away my life*, He says, *but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and to take it up again*. He was offered, says Isaias, *because he willed it*; and therefore it is not said that His spirit departed, or separated itself from Him, but on the contrary that He gave up His spirit, breathed it out, and placed it in the hands of His Eternal Father.

Accordingly, St. Athanasius remarks that He *bowed down his head* to die, thereby to consent to the approach of death, which otherwise could not dare touch Him; and, *crying out with a loud voice*, He surrendered His spirit to His Father, to show that as He had sufficient strength and breath not to die, yet He had so much love that He could no longer live without vivifying by His death those who otherwise could never avoid death, or attain to true life. On this account, the death of the Saviour was a true sacrifice, and a holocaustic sacrifice, which He Himself offered to His Father, for our redemption. While the pains and dolours of His Passion were so great and excessive that any other person would have died of them, yet, as far as regarded Him, He never would have died of them if He had not willed it, or if the fire of His infinite charity had not consumed His life. He was then the high-priest who offered Himself to His Father, and He immolated Himself in love, to love, by love, for love, and of love.

Beware, however, of thinking that this loving death of the Saviour happened after the manner of a rapture. The object for which His charity led Him to death was not so amiable as to ravish His divine soul to it. No, His soul quitted His body after the manner of an ecstasy, pushed and impelled by love, as we see myrrh pouring out its first liquor from abundance alone, without being pressed or drawn in any way. This accords with what He Himself has said, as already remarked: *No one takes away or ravishes my life from me, but I lay it down voluntarily.* O God! what a furnace to inflame us to the performance of the exercises of holy love for a Saviour so good, seeing that He so lovingly performed them

for us who are so bad! The sweet *charity of Jesus Christ presses us!*

CHAPTER IX.

GOD LOOKS UPON US LOVINGLY, NOTWITHSTANDING OUR WEAKNESS.

You ask me whether our Lord thinks of you, and whether He looks upon you with love. Yes, He thinks of you, and not only of you, but of the least hair of your head. This is an article of faith. We cannot doubt it. I know well indeed that you do not doubt it, but only express, as you have done the dryness, aridity, and insensibility in which you at present find your soul. *Truly God is in this place, and I knew it not*, said Jacob; that is to say, I had no sentiment of it, it did not appear so to me.

And that God looks upon you with love you have no reason to doubt, for He looks upon the most dreadful sinners in the world lovingly when they have the least true desire to be converted to Him. Tell me, do you not intend to belong to God? Do you not desire to serve Him faithfully? And who gave you this desire, this intention, unless Himself in His loving regard for you?

To examine whether your heart pleases Him is not necessary, but rather whether His heart pleases you. And if you look upon His heart, it is impossible but that it will please you, for it is a Heart most sweet, most kind, most condescending, most gracious towards miserable creatures, provided that they acknowledge their misery. And who will not love this royal Heart, so full of tenderness for us?

You remark very well that these temptations happen to you because your heart is without tenderness towards God ; for it is quite true that if you had tenderness, you would have consolation, and if you had consolation, you would no longer be in pain. But the love of God does not consist in consolation nor in tenderness, for if it did, then Our Lord would not have loved His Father when He was sad even to death and cried out : *My Father, my Father, why hast thou abandoned me?* And still it was at that moment He made the greatest act of love which it is possible to conceive.

We would always like to have a little consolation, a little sugar in our tea, that is to say, the feeling of love and tenderness, and consequently consolation ; and in like manner we would much wish to be without imperfections ; but we must have patience to belong to human nature, and not to angelic nature. Our imperfections ought not to please us ; on the contrary, we should say with the holy Apostle : *Oh ! miserable me, who will deliver me from this body of death?* But they ought not to astonish us, or to take away our courage ; we ought even to derive submission, humility, and distrust of ourselves from them, but not discouragement, nor affliction of heart, much less doubtfulness of God's love towards us. Thus, as the weakness and infirmity of a child displease its mother, yet she does not cease to love it, but cherishes it with tenderness and compassion, so God, while He approves not of our imperfections and venial sins, does not cease to love us tenderly ; hence David had reason to say to God : *Have pity on me, O Lord, for I am weak.*

But enough : live joyful ; Our Lord looks upon you

with love, and with so much the more tenderness as you are the more feeble. Never permit your mind willingly to entertain thoughts to the contrary; and when they come, regard them not, turn your eyes away from their iniquity, and have recourse to God with a courageous humility, to speak to Him of His ineffable goodness by which He loves us, poor, abject, and miserable as we are.

Alas! what obligations we are under to Our Lord, and how much confidence we should have that what His mercy has begun in us it will accomplish, and that He will give such increase to this little vessel of oil, the good-will we have, that all our vessels will be filled with it, and many others belonging to our neighbours too! But we must close the door of our chamber fast, that is, retire along with our heart more and more into the divine goodness.

CHAPTER X.

HOW MUCH OUR SWEET SAVIOUR LOVED EVERY ONE OF US PERSONALLY.

CONSIDER the love with which Jesus Christ Our Lord suffered so much in this world, particularly in the Garden of Olives, and on Mount Calvary. His love had you in view, and by a long series of pains and sufferings obtained from God the Father the good resolutions of your heart, and whatever else was necessary for you in order to nourish and strengthen them. O resolutions, how precious you are, since you are the fruit of the Passion of my Saviour! How much my soul ought to cherish you, since you

are so dear to my Jesus! O Saviour of my soul, you would die in order to purchase these resolutions for me: grant that I may die rather than lose them!

Think well on it, faithful soul: it is certain that on the tree of the cross the heart of our Lord Jesus beheld yours, and that He loved it, and by His love obtained for it all the favours which you have ever received, or will ever receive: among them, your good resolutions. Yes, pious soul, we can all say with Jeremias: *O Lord, before I existed, Thou hadst regard to me, and didst call me by name.*

What a difference between those who enjoy the light of the sun, and those who have only the faint light of a lamp! The former are not jealous or envious of one another, for they well know that their light is more than sufficient for all, that its enjoyment by one does not hinder its enjoyment by another, and that no one possesses it less while all possess it in common. But as for the light of a lamp, which is feeble, of brief duration, and insufficient for many, every one desires to have it in his own chamber, and here arises an occasion of dissension. The worth of sublunary things is so contemptible and mean, that while one enjoys them it is necessary that another should be deprived of them; and human friendship is so uncertain and weak that in proportion as it is communicated towards some it is enfeebled towards others; on which account we are jealous and annoyed when we have not companions. The heart of God is so abundant in love, its excellence is so infinitely great, that all can possess it without any one possessing it less, this infinity never being exhausted, though all the beings in the universe should be filled with it; for after all are filled, its infinity

always remains the same, without any diminution. The sun does not look less upon one rose in the midst of a thousand millions of other flowers than if he looked down upon it alone. And God does not shed His love less upon one soul while He loves an infinity of others than if He loved it alone, the force of His love not being diminished by the multitude of rays which it sends forth, but always remaining full of His immensity.

Ah! my God, how frequently we should put the query to our soul: Is it possible that I have been loved, and so tenderly loved by my Saviour, that He was pleased to think of me in particular, and in all those little occurrences by which He has drawn me to Him? How much should we appreciate them, and how carefully turn them to our profit!

What is sweeter than this thought: the amiable heart of my God thought of my soul, loved it, and procured a thousand means of salvation for it, as if He had no other soul to think of in the world? As the sun enlightening one portion of the earth, shines nothing less than if it did not shine there, so Our Lord thought of and laboured for all His dear children in such a way, that He thought of every one of them as if He never had a thought of the others. *He loved me*, says St. Paul, *and delivered Himself for me*; as if to say: for me alone, and just the same as if He had done nothing for the rest of men. This consideration, faithful soul, should be engraven on your heart, to nourish and strengthen your resolutions, which are so dear to the Saviour.

God then is good to you, is it not true? But to whom is the supreme lover of hearts not good? Those who taste Him can never be satiated, and those

who approach His heart cannot refrain from praising and blessing Him for ever.

After having made these touching considerations, you ought often to repeat with heart and mouth the burning words of St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Catherine of Sienna, and others: "No, I am no longer mine; whether I live or die, I belong to my Saviour."

There is nothing left of me or mine; my being is Jesus, my property to belong to Him. O world, thou art always the same, and I indeed have always been myself; but henceforward I shall no longer be myself. No, we shall no longer be ourselves, for our hearts will be changed, and the world, which has so often deceived us, will be deceived by us; for, perceiving our change only by little and little, it will imagine us to be Esaus, and we shall really be Jacobs.

It is necessary that all these sentiments should sink deep into our hearts, and that, leaving our reflections and our prayers, we should pass to our affairs sweetly, lest the liquor of our good resolutions should evaporate and be lost; for we must allow it to saturate and penetrate our whole soul: everything, nevertheless, without strain of mind or body.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE OF JESUS FOR SINNERS.

OUR Lord, the great and excellent physician of our infirmities, announced everywhere, before coming into this world, both His arrival and the maladies - He would cure; sometimes by His prophets:—*I will*

bind up that which was broken and I will comfort that which was weak. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; to teach the poor He hath sent me, to heal the contrite of heart. They will be cleansed from all their iniquities—and thou shalt save the humble; sometimes by His own mouth: Come to me, all ye that are weary; but, above all, when He was called Jesus, for physicians do not always cure, and therefore it was not sufficient to call Him merely physician, but He should be called Saviour, inasmuch as His remedies are infallible. What wonder then if in the Gospel we find Him surrounded by the sick, by sinners, and by publicans! O vain and foolish murmuring of the Jews, when they said: "This man receiveth sinners." Whom would you wish Him to receive? Is it not the honour of a physician to be sought for by the sick, and so much the more as their maladies are considered incurable? Our Lord, not so much to condemn the temerity of these Pharisees as to give us courage to approach Him, banished far from Him, by fitting similitudes, their ungrounded supposition. Let us conclude then with reason from His discourse, that it is His pleasure to lead back sinners to mercy.*

* "Though it may happen that a mother should be so hardened as to forget her child, yet God promises He will never forget us. His mercy is so great that He is always ready to pardon any one who wishes to return to his duty. The divine goodness and the truly penitent soul are so well in accordance that, after reconciliation, there does not appear one trace of a rupture having taken place; the divine goodness does not reproach the soul for its past irregularities, but arranges everything so happily that past irregularities are never of any prejudice to the soul that has resolved to correct them."—*Thaulerus*.

The soul departs from God, flying away from His graces and the means which He proposes for our salvation, as we say that a man flies from physicians: not that he hates the person so much as the prescription of the physician.

By how far sinners are from God, by so far are they from His mercies. What a pity! what regrets! for that which the great St. Augustine says is most true: "Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart cannot rest, but in Thee." Oh! what disorder in man with regard to his God and with regard to himself! But there is one consolation in the midst of so great a desolation, that, though the sinner is far from God, he may return and will be well received. "Let the impious forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have pity on Him; for He is bounteous in His mercy to forgive."* Thus, how were the poor Prodigal and the unfortunate Absalom received by their fathers? and, otherwise, what would

* Observe that God not only says He will pardon the ordinary sinner, one who has been carried away by common passions, but even the impious, that is to say, the man without faith, without law, without religion, the man who has insolently risen up against God and His Christ, who has uttered a thousand blasphemies, who has outraged heaven and scandalized earth by the frightful impiety of his language, who, even as a Manasses, has destroyed the worship of God, overthrown its altars, erected idols in their place. This is the monster, the very thought of whom makes us tremble, that God promises to forgive, not after a long lapse of years, spent in laborious penance, but on the very first day of his conversion, though it should be the last of his life, if his return to God is sincere. And you, souls of little faith, still doubt whether God pardons you your old wanderings, although for a long time you have wept over, or at least detested, them.

become of us, for "all have sinned"? "Every man is a liar," that is to say, a sinner. If we say that we are without sin, we deceive ourselves. "Return to the Lord, and forsake your injustice; for his mercy is great towards those who are converted to him." Why is He called Saviour, unless in order to save? "Sinners and publicans drew nigh to hear his word."*

In the twenty-second chapter of the First Book of Kings, it is related of David, that being in the cave of Odollam, needy and afflicted men gathered to him, and he became their king; this was to prefigure the second and true David, who should allow the poor and needy, the afflicted and the miserable, those groaning under the heavy burden of corporal infirmities, and much more those sinking under the insupportable burden of sin, to approach to Him.

The Pharisees murmur because He receives sinners; but let us observe for a little how He receives them, and we shall behold great wonders. That the sinner can depart from God, and from himself, is certain. The Spirit goeth and returneth not. "Thy destruction is thine own, O Israel; thy help is only in me." And St. Paul: "We are not capable of ourselves to have any good thought, but our sufficiency is from God." We can run away quickly enough, but can-

* We can say that there is nothing more in conformity with the inclinations of Jesus than to succour the miserable and to show mercy to those who ask pardon for their offences. Let no person then fear to implore His mercy, and let every one know the difference that St. Bernard draws between the elect and the reprobate: the latter, he says, think not of rising after their fall, but the former no sooner fall than they rise again, and are only the more ready to run in the way of God.

not make one step back again. Our Lord prevents the sinner and goes to seek him, calls him and invites him to return; otherwise, the sinner would never think of it. "I acknowledge that my strength comes from thee, my God, because thou art my support. The mercy of my God will prevent me." It is God who produces good wishes and desires within us, and it is He who perfects them, and conducts them to execution. "Draw me after thee, and we shall run." He who voyages with the wind, returns with a contrary wind. Never would Absalom have returned to his father, if the Thecuan woman had not obtained his forgiveness; never would the sinner return, if mercy did not prevent him. O infinite goodness! Our Lord goes in search of the lost sheep; otherwise, it would never return. Ah! though some murmur at mercy, let us at least praise it, for it receives sinners, and seeks them. Jesus being in the temple on the day of the great solemnity, cries out, saying: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink; come to me all you, &c." . . . "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost. How many times would I have gathered them together as the hen gathereth her chickens!"*

* God has promised to pardon, and to pardon the greatest and most numerous crimes. "Yes," He says by His prophet, "though your sins should have made your soul as red as scarlet, I will make it as white as snow. You are plunged in crime, and it is only with horror I behold you. Still I cannot turn away my eyes from you, and close my ears to your prayers. Be converted, change your thoughts, desires, and conduct, cease to do evil, learn to do good, and then come before me with confidence. and if I do not hear you, accuse me as un-

But, oh, miserable that we are! we are often called, and we only turn a deaf ear. "I have called, and you have not heard," says God. We are drawn, and we obstinately resist Him. He complains, saying: "All the day long have I stretched out my hands to this incredulous and rebellious people."

O holy, fortunate, and happy crowd of sinners and publicans, who approach to our Lord! They are not like those invited to the great feast, who excused themselves: they come, and are welcome. O my Saviour, how have these sinners drawn nigh to Thee, since Thou art just? For David says absolutely of the just man that evil must not approach to him: "Depart from me, ye wicked." "No one can come to me, unless my Father draw him; and him who cometh to me I will not cast forth." Since it is thus, O Saviour, O Redeemer, O good God, I can say to the multitude on Thy part: "Approach to God, and you will be enlightened, and your faces will not be confounded; for he receives sinners."

But behold the manner of approaching to Him: we must retire from sin. "Retire from evil. Go out from Babylon, flee the Chaldees; peace is not with the wicked," says the Lord. You have sinned by thought, word, and deed; you must have recourse to contrary things, contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

Our Lord is like the sun which shines everywhere. "His course is from the summit of heaven." He sheds his rays on the just and the unjust, and from

faithful to my promises." We can then, with the just Israelite, tell God to remember His promises and to keep His word by pardoning our sins: a word which supports our hope in the remembrance of our crimes, and without which we should fall into despair.

the muddiest pools extracts vapours, which, arrived at a certain elevation, are converted into a gentle rain, which, falling in its turn, gives life and fruitfulness to plants. From the greatest sinners, God brings forth holy exhalations, which are considerations on their faults, up to a certain height of fear and apprehension, as to a middle region of the air; considering that they are between heaven and hell, between salvation and damnation. "His spirit breathes, and the waters flow." These are the waters of contrition, which make the earth germinate and produce the fruits of salvation. But we must allow ourselves to be drawn, we must acknowledge our miserable condition. Let us then depart, let us depart from Egypt, let us approach Our Lord, let us make provision of good works; let the feet of our affections be bare, let us clothe ourselves with innocence, let us not be satisfied with crying for mercy, let us go forth from Egypt, let us delay no longer. The hour is come to arise from sleep, since we know that He receives sinners; the angels await our repentance, the saints pray for it.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW MUCH THE MERCY OF GOD APPEARS IN THE
CONVERSIONS OF ST. PAUL AND DAVID.

WHEN the Saviour came into the world, men had arrived at the height of malice. Among the Jews, the laws were in the hands of Annas and Caiphas, than whom none could be more wicked. Herod reigned in Galilee, Pontius Pilate presided in Judea.

It was at this time, I say, that God came into the world to redeem us, and to deliver us from the slavery of sin and the tyranny of our enemy: impelled by His immense goodness alone to communicate Himself to us. Truly the heart of our divine Saviour and Master was all full of mercy and meekness towards the human race, and He gave many admirable proofs and testimonies of it on innumerable occasions when His mercy made His greatness shine forth, as we read in various portions of the Holy Scripture.

When was St. Paul forgiven, unless when he had arrived at the height of malice? Every one knows that at the time of his conversion, he was in the midst of his greatest hatred and fury against God, and unable to satisfy his rage against Our Saviour, had turned his wrath against the Church, which, if possible, he would have driven from the face of the earth; *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*; and, nevertheless, it was then that the Lord vanquished his malice and ingratitude, touched his heart, converted him, forgave all his iniquities, even at the very time when he was most undeserving of mercy. O God! how great was the divine mercy in regard to this holy apostle! yet we every day see like effects of the goodness of God towards sinners; for when they are most hardened in their sins, and have come to such a degree of malice that they live as if there were neither a God, nor a heaven, nor a hell, it is then He manifests the bowels of His pity and His sweet compassion, sending a ray of His divine light into their souls, discovering to them their miserable condition, that they may arise from it.

But never do I read of the conversion of David without being astonished to see that this prophet, after having committed such great sins, remained for nearly a year without returning to himself, buried in a profound lethargy, never awaking or perceiving his miserable condition. O God! his sin would have been in some manner excusable, if it had been committed whilst he was yet a shepherd, tending his flocks; but that David should have sinned after having received so many and such great graces from the Divine Majesty, so many lights and favours, after having wrought such marvels and prodigies, after having been brought up in the bosom of the sweet clemency and mercy of God; that he should have committed such crimes, and remained afterwards for so long a time without recognising them, oh, this is indeed a matter of the greatest amazement!

He commits many sins, heaping them upon one another, and lies stagnating in his iniquities for nearly a year, without perceiving his miserable state or remembering his God!

Behold poor David then without any disposition for grace, through his forgetfulness of God; but the divine goodness, seeing his blindness, and to withdraw him from sin, sends him the prophet Nathan, who, wishing to make him recognise his fault, uses a parable: telling him that a rich man, who had a large number of sheep and oxen, had taken away from a poor man one single little lamb, which he had nourished in his house, and which he singularly loved. See, I beg of you, how wisely the prophet speaks to him in the third person of his fault, in order to make him recognise and confess it; but

David, plunged in such complete blindness as not to see his sin, does not perceive that the prophet Nathan refers to him in any manner, and pronounces sentence of death against the man who had stolen the sheep, commanding him, moreover, to restore four-fold its value.

Consider, I beg of you, how hardened poor David was in his sin, of which he had not any sentiment; but as for the faults of others, he could very well be aware of them, and knew how to impose a punishment proportioned to their guilt. But the prophet Nathan, seeing that David did not recognise his sins, told him boldly that it was he who had stolen away the lamb, which poor David understanding, being struck with contrition, he cried out: "I have sinned against the Lord." *Peccavi Domino*. Then Nathan said to him: "Because you have confessed your sin, God forgives you, and you shall not die."

Now, what greater effect would you wish to see of the mercy of God than this? For, at the time when David would appear to have reached the very summit of his malice, God forgave his iniquity. But what a change did he manifest after recognising his fault! He did nothing but weep and deplore his blindness; no other word was heard from him than this, *Peccavi*, and, crying to God for mercy, he went about continually repeating the psalm of penance, *Miserere mei, Deus*.

There are many other similar examples in the Holy Scriptures, by which God has displayed to us the greatness of His mercy, and from which we see the truth of these words of Isaias: "Because their malice has come to its height, it will be forgiven them."

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW GREAT IS THE MERCY OF GOD ON THE RETURN OF
THE SINNER.*

THE entrance of sin takes away life from the heart and from all its good works, the entrance of grace restores life to the heart and to all its good works. A severe winter kills the plants of the field, so that, were it to continue always, they should remain for ever dead. Sin, the sad and fearful winter of the soul, kills the holy works which it finds there, and, were it to continue always, never should life or vigour return. But as, on the approach of lovely spring, not only the new seeds which we cast into the earth, shoot up and bud, under the influence of this mild season of fecundity, every one according to its kind, but also the old plants, which the bitterness of the preceding winter had wasted and withered,

* "There is not a page in the Gospel in which we do not see that Jesus has a certain tenderness for reconciled sinners more than for the just who persevere. Who does not know that the penitent Magdalen was His faithful and His well-beloved; that Peter, after having denied Him, was chosen to confirm the faith of his brethren; that He left the whole flock in the desert to run after His lost sheep; and that the one of all His children who most sensibly moved His bowels, was the returned Prodigal? Hence we are to understand that while innocence has its tears, He esteems more precious those which sins cause to flow in the holy weepings of penance, and that justice recovered has something more agreeable in His eyes than justice preserved." — *Bossuet*.

grow green again, and take back their former life; so sin being destroyed, and the grace of divine love coming back to the soul, not only the new affections, which the return of the sacred spring-time brings, germinate and produce many merits and benedictions, but also the works faded away under the harshness of the winter of past sin, being delivered from their mortal enemy, are re-invigorated, and, as it were, resuscitated, flourish anew, and fructify in merits for eternal life. Such is the omnipotence of celestial love, or rather the love of celestial omnipotence. *If the impious man turn away from his impiety, and do judgment and justice, his soul shall live. Be converted, and do penance for your iniquities, and your iniquity shall not be to your ruin,* says the Almighty Lord. And what does He mean by saying: *iniquity shall not be to your ruin*, unless that the ruins it had made will be repaired? Thus, besides the thousand caresses which the Prodigal Son received from his father, he was re-established in all the dignities and advantages he had lost. And Job, an image of the penitent sinner, received in the end *double of all he had possessed*. God, then, does not forget the works of those who, having lost His holy love by sin, recover it by penance.* But God forgets works, when they lose their merit and sanctity by supervening sin, and

* "We learn from the Saviour of souls that the conversion of sinful man is a feast to the heavenly spirits, our sighs are their joy, our grief their thanksgiving. The tears of penitents are so precious that they are received on earth to be carried to heaven, and their efficacy is so great, that they reach even to the angels. And what is more wonderful is, that whilst innocence has its tears, the angels value more those which sins call forth; and the bitterness of penance has something sweeter

only remembers them again when they return to life and value by the presence of love; so that the faithful, in order to be recompensed for their good works, as well by an increase of grace, as in the enjoyment of future glory and of eternal life, are not obliged never to relapse into sin, but it suffices, according to the sacred Council of Trent, to depart this life in the grace and charity of God.

God has promised an eternal recompense to the works of the just man; but *if the just man turn away from his justice* by sin, God will no longer remember his justices, or the good works which he has done. But if, nevertheless, this poor man, after falling into sin, rises again, and returns to divine love by penance, God will no longer remember his sin, and if He will no longer remember his sin, He will then remember his preceding good works, and the recompense they had deserved, since sin, which alone can take them away from the divine memory, is effaced, abolished, and annihilated; thus the justice of God obliges His mercy, or rather, His mercy obliges His justice, to regard anew the past good works, as if they had never been forgotten; otherwise, the penitent king would not have dared to say to his Master: *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and confirm me with thy perfect spirit.* For as you see he not only seeks a *newness of*

in their eyes than the honey of devotion. Understand, O penitent sinners! that your tears penetrate the heavens, and rejoice the angels; see how fruitful they are to those who shed them, since they are prized by the celestial intelligences. What abundant satisfaction will affliction of heart one day produce in us, since it already effects such joy with the angels, to whom the Son of God promises we shall be made like by His grace!" — *Bossuet.*

spirit and of heart, but asks that the joy of which he had been deprived by sin, may be restored to him. Now this joy is nothing else than the wine of heavenly love, *which rejoices the heart of man.*

The same may not be said of works of charity as of sin; for the works of the just man are not effaced, abolished, or annihilated by supervening sin, but only forgotten; while the sin of the wicked man is not only forgotten, but effaced, abolished, and annihilated by holy penance. Wherefore, a just man's sin does not vivify sins forgiven, for they were entirely annihilated; but love, returning to the soul of the penitent, restores life to former good works, because they were not annihilated, but only cast into oblivion. It is not reasonable that sin should have as much power against charity, as charity against sin; for sin proceeds from our weakness, but charity from the divine omnipotence. *If sin abounds* in malice to destroy, *grace superabounds* to repair; and the *mercy* of God, by which sin is forgiven, is gloriously magnified above His *justice* by which the good works preceding sin are forgotten. Thus in all the corporal cures which Our Lord miraculously wrought, He not only restored health, but added such new benedictions as made the excellence of the cure surpass the virulence of the malady, so good is He towards men.*

*“ In the reconciliation of man with God, it is not man who makes the sacrifice. God was not the first to break friendship: on the contrary, He had loaded us with His favours. Man was the aggressor; what insolence! But God forgives and forgets. And if he who forgives once, and he who is forgiven, submit voluntarily to the laws of reconciled friendship, what ought to be the gratitude of him to whom many and grievous injuries are forgiven? It is an unquestionable truth, then, that the reconciled sinner owes to God a more earnest friend-

When Nabuzardan destroyed Jerusalem, and Israel was led into captivity, the sacred fire of the altar was hidden in a well, where it was changed into mud; but this mud being drawn from the well, and placed in the sun at the time of the return from captivity, the dead fire resuscitated, and the mud was converted into flames. Thus, when the just man becomes the slave of sin, all the good works which he had performed are miserably forgotten, and reduced to mud; but on his departure from captivity, when by penance he returns to the grace of divine love, his preceding good works are drawn from the well of oblivion, and, touched by the rays of celestial mercy, revive, and are transformed into flames as bright as ever they had been, to be placed again on the sacred altar of the divine approbation, and to receive back their former dignity, merit, and value.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW FULL OF MERCY GOD IS, EVEN TOWARDS THE DAMNED.

WE ought to feel extreme pleasure in considering how God exercises His mercy by so many different

ship than the just man who perseveres in his fidelity. This friendship, like a plant once dead, but resuscitated, casts deeper roots, lest it should be again destroyed. Hearts become like knots, more tightly joined; and as bones become firmer in places where they had been broken, on account of the extraordinary assistance brought by nature to the injured parts, so friends, who meet again in charity, display such affection to renew their broken friendship, that it remains ever after solid and inviolable."—*Bossuet*.

favours to angels and to men, in heaven and on earth, and how He exercises His justice in an endless variety of pains and chastisements; for His justice and His mercy are equally amiable and admirable in themselves, since both are nothing else than the one self-same divinity. But inasmuch as the effects of His justice are full of bitterness, He sweetens them always with a mixture of His mercy, so that in the midst of the deluge of His just indignation, the green olive is preserved, and the devout soul, like a chaste dove, is able at length to find the verdant branch, if only it will lovingly ponder and meditate, after the manner of doves. Thus death, afflictions, labours, which, by the just ordinance of God, are the punishments of sin, are also, by His sweet mercy, so many ladders to ascend to heaven, so many means to increase in grace, so many merits to obtain glory. Blessed then are poverty, hunger, sadness, sickness, death, persecution; for they are truly the just punishments of our sins, but punishments so tempered, and as doctors say, so perfumed, with the divine sweetness, kindness, and clemency, that their bitterness is made agreeable. It is a strange thing, but true, that if the damned were not blinded by their obstinacy and hatred against God, they would find consolation in their pains, and behold the divine mercy admirably blended with the flames that burn them eternally. So true is this, that the saints considering, on the one hand, the terrible and horrible torments of the damned, praise the divine justice, crying out: Thou art just, O God! Thou art equitable; justice has ever reigned in Thy judgments. But considering, on the other, that these pains, though eternal and incomprehensible, are much less

than the crimes for which they are inflicted, deserve ; and filled with astonishment at the infinite mercy of God, they exclaim: O Lord, Thou art good, since even in the height of Thy wrath, Thou canst not contain the torrent of Thy mercies, but their waters flow out over the impetuous flames of hell !

CHAPTER XV.

THE EXCELLENCE OF ABANDONMENT TO GOD.

ABANDONMENT is the virtue of virtues; it is the cream of charity, the fragrance of humility, the sweetness of patience, and the fruit of perseverance. Great is this virtue, and worthy of being practised by the beloved children of God.

My Father, says our good Saviour on the cross, *into thy hands I commend my spirit* (Luke, xxiii. 46). It is true He was pleased to say: *All is consummated*, and, *I have accomplished all that thou gavest me to do* (John, xix. 30, and xvii. 4); but nevertheless, if it be Thy will that I remain still on the cross to suffer more, I am content; I resign my soul into Thy hands; do with it as pleases Thee.

Thus we should act on all occasions, whether in joy or sorrow; surrendering ourselves to the divine will, to be guided according to its good pleasure, without any concern about our own particular desires.*

* St. Teresa wrote to her director: "The state of my soul is, that I wish nothing but what God wishes. The will and good-pleasure of God are so blended with my desires and inclinations that I have no other wish than His; it seems to me

Our Lord loves with an extremely tender love all those who abandon themselves entirely to His paternal care, allowing themselves to be governed by His divine providence, without considering whether its dealings towards them are sweet or bitter, being assured that every thing coming from His paternal heart will be for their good and advantage. Placing their confidence in God, they say: "My Father, I commend my soul, my body, all that I possess, into Thy hands, that Thou mayest do with them in Thy love what pleases Thee; whatever happens, nothing will move me from my firm resolution of acquiescing in the Divine will concerning me and all that belongs to me; I wish to bury my will in that of God, or rather I wish Our Lord to will in me and for me, according to His good pleasure: I cast the care of myself into His hands."

Sometimes Our Lord wishes that souls chosen for the service of His divine Majesty should nourish and fortify in themselves a resolution of following Him through all disgusts, aridities, repugnances, and bitter-nesses of a spiritual life, without consolation, tenderness, or enjoyment, and that they should believe themselves deserving of no other treatment; thus treading in the footsteps of our Divine Saviour, without any support but the Divine Will.

Never shall we be reduced to such an extremity as to be unable to offer to the Divine Majesty a holy submission to the Divine Will.

even that I could not have any other; I sigh for it alone, and in all things; I keep this disposition ever in my heart. I have no need of multiplying acts of submission to the will of God; I love all that God wills, and in His will I sovereignly rejoice."

We must possess a continual and imperturbable equanimity amid the great variety of human occurrences, and though all things change around us, remain immovable, with our eyes fixed on God alone. And though all things, I will not merely say around us, but even within us, should turn topsy-turvy; whether our soul be joyful or sorrowful, in peace or in trouble, in light or in darkness, in temptation or in repose, in happiness or in disgust; though the sun scorch, or the dew refresh; we should always keep our will fixed on the good pleasure of God, as its sole and supreme object.*

It is true that we require great confidence to abandon ourselves, without any reserve, to Divine Providence; but when we do abandon all, Our Lord takes care of all, and disposes of all. But if we reserve anything which we are unwilling to confide to Him, He leaves us, as if He would say: You think yourself sufficiently wise to manage that affair without Me; you can do so, and see what will come of it.

St. Magdalen, who was wholly abandoned to Our Lord, remained at His feet, and listened while He spoke; and when He ceased to speak, she ceased to listen, but she did not move away from Him; thus her soul, abandoned to Our Lord, remained in His arms as a child in the bosom of its mother, which, when she puts it down to walk, walks until its

* A soul that lives on the dry bread of tribulation, that finds itself void of all good, that continually beholds its poverty, unworthiness, and corruption, that never ceases to seek God, though He seems to reject it, that seeks Him alone, not itself in God, is far above a soul that is anxious to know its perfection, that is disturbed at losing sight thereof, and that always wishes to receive some new caresses from God.

mother takes it up again, and when she carries it, allows itself to be carried. It knows not, cares not, whither she goes; but is carried or led as its mother pleases; in like manner, the soul, which loves the good-pleasure of God in all that happens to it, either allows itself to be carried, or walks if necessary, doing at all times, with great care, the signified will of God.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD

Look not to the matter of your actions, which may be contemptible in itself, but to the honour they possess in being willed by God, ordered in His providence, arranged in His wisdom. Purity of heart consists in valuing all things according to the weights of the sanctuary, which are nothing else than the will of God; do not love, then, anything too ardently, not even virtue, which we sometimes lose, by wishing for it beyond the bounds of moderation.

Our centre is the will of God; God wishes that I should do this action now, God desires this matter of me, what more is necessary? While I do this, I am not obliged to do anything else.

O God! may Thy will be done, not only in the execution of Thy commandments, counsels, and inspirations, which we ought to obey, but also in suffering the afflictions which befall us; may Thy will be done in us and by us in every thing that pleases Thee!*

* A soul truly submissive to the will of God is attached to nothing created; it knows that all things, out of God, are

The truly loving heart loves the divine good-pleasure, not only in consolations, but in afflictions; it even loves pains, crosses, and labours more, because the chief mark of love is, that it makes the lover suffer for the beloved. And why should we not endure the same hand of the Lord, when it dispenses afflictions as when it distributes consolations? Oh! how good a thing it is to live only in God, to labour only in God, to rejoice only in God!

Oh! if the holy will of God reigned in us, how happy should we be! We should never commit any sin, or live according to our irregular inclinations, for that holy will is the rule of all excellence and sanctity. It is self-love, says St. Bernard, that burns eternally in hell, for it ruins and destroys whatever it touches. If found in *heaven*, it is cast out; for the angels were banished only because of self-will, because they wished to become like God, and on that account were precipitated into hell. If found on *earth*, it robs man of grace, and subjects him to death, as to our first parents in the terrestrial paradise. In a word, it brings misfortune alone; and, therefore, when we discover anything within us not conformed to the will of God, we should prostrate ourselves before Him, and say to Him that we detest and disown our own will, and everything in us that could displease Him, or that

vanity and nothingness; hence it has no other end or object in view than to die to itself, and to be resigned fully, always, and in all things.—*Henry Suso*.

St. Vincent de Paul excelled in this point, living detached from himself and from all creatures. His constant endeavour was to be conformed to the good-pleasure of God, and to adore lovingly the arrangements of His Providence.

is contrary to His holy love, promising Him never to wish for anything but what will be conformable to His divine good-pleasure.

Let us open the arms of our will, embrace lovingly the Cross, and acquiesce in the most holy will of God, singing to Him this hymn of resignation and conformity: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

CHAPTER XVII.

PRACTICE OF CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

CAST your eyes over the general will of God, by which He wills all the works of His mercy and justice that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and, with a profound humility, approve, praise, and love this holy, just, amiable, and supreme will. Cast your eyes, next, over the special will of God, by which he loves His friends, and bestows on them various gifts of consolation and tribulation; dwell some time on this thought, considering the diversity of consolations, but particularly the tribulations, which the good endure; then, with a great humility, approve, praise, and love this will.

Consider this will in regard to yourself, in every thing good or ill that happens, or can happen, to you, except sin; then approve, praise, and love it, protesting that you wish ever to honour, cherish, and adore this sovereign will, committing to it your person and all that belongs to you. Finally, conclude with great confidence in this holy will, that it will do every thing necessary for your good and happiness.

Oh, what a consolation for us, if we were accustomed to receive all things from the paternal hand of Him who, in opening it, fills every living creature with His blessing! What unction would sweeten our pains! What honey and oil should we draw from the hardest rocks! What moderation should accompany us in prosperity, since God would only send us adversity to draw from it His own glory and our salvation. Let us think well on this truth, and regard only God in all events, and all events only in God.

We must know that the abandonment of our will means properly the surrender of it to God; for it will avail us nothing to renounce ourselves, unless we become united to the divine goodness.

But we sometimes see persons, who, coming to the service of God, say: Lord! I commend my spirit into Thy hands, but on condition that Thou wilt always give me consolations, without anything to contradict my will, and wilt give me superiors in all respects according to my liking.

Alas! what are you doing? Do you not see that this is not to resign your soul into the hands of God, as Our Lord did? Do you not know that this is only one of those reserves from which all our troubles, inquietudes, and other imperfections, usually arise? For, as soon as things happen not according to our expectations and anticipations, a sudden desolation seizes on our poor souls. Why is this, unless because we are not resigned with indifference into the hands of God? Oh, how happy should we be, if we faithfully practised this virtue! Undoubtedly, we should arrive at the highest perfection of a St. Catherine of

Sienna, of a St. Francis, of a St. Angela of Foligno, and of many others. Consider that the eternal Son of God came Himself to teach us this submission and reverence due to the supreme will, not only by informing us in words that He had not come to do His own will, but that of His Father, but still more by the example of His resignation: "My Father! if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me; yet not my will, but thine be done." And our divine Master taught us to ask every day that the will of God should be done on earth as it is in heaven; and, in fine, He concluded the course of His mortal life by the surrender of Himself to the will and disposal of His eternal Father; "My Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Act then thus, and say with Our Lord on all occasions: *My God, I commend my spirit*, absolutely and unreservedly, *into thy hands*; dost Thou wish me to be in aridity or in consolation? to be contradicted? to meet with difficulties and repugnances? to be loved or not loved? in all events, *I commend my spirit into thy hands*. Let those, therefore, who are employed in the exercises of an active life not desire to exchange them for those of a contemplative, and let those who contemplate not quit their contemplation until God commands it; let us be silent when necessary, and speak when necessary. If we act in this manner, we shall be able to say, at the hour of death, in imitation of our divine Saviour: *It is consummated*; my God! all is consummated; I have accomplished Thy divine will in the various occurrences that happened to me by Thy Providence; what remains for me now to do, but to commend my spirit

into Thy hands, at the decline of my life, as I gave it to Thee at the beginning of it, and during its course ?

O my God ! conduct me by Thy will ; grant me to pass through cold, heat, light, darkness, labour, repose ; though Thou shouldst lead me to the gates of death, I shall fear nothing in Thy company.

O heavenly Father ! may Thy will be done on earth, where consolations are rare, and labours innumerable. And thou, O my soul ! take it as thy daily practice to say, when anything painful befalls thee : Not my will, but that of my God be done !

CHAPTER XVIII.

GOD IS OUR FATHER.*

To bless and thank God for all the appointments of His Providence is indeed a holy occupation ; but if, while abandoning ourselves to God, that He may do whatever He wishes with us, without attending on our part to what happens, though we are not ex-

*“What district of Palestine did not experience, a thousand and a thousand times, His kindness? I doubt not but He would have sought the miserable to the ends of the earth, if His Father’s order had not detained Him in Judea. Did He ever see a miserable sufferer, without being moved to pity? Ah! how enrapturing it is to find in the Gospel, that He never undertakes any important cure, but first of all He manifests some tokens of compassion! There are a thousand beautiful instances of this in the Gospel. The first favour He grants is to sympathize for the afflicted with a truly paternal affection; His heart hears the voice of misery which invokes it, and His arm is moved to bestow relief.”—*Bossuet*.

pected to be quite devoid of feeling, we could divert our minds to the divine goodness, praising it, not in the effects which it ordains, but in itself, and in its own excellence, then, without doubt, we should perform an exercise much more holy. Let us employ a parable, since this method was most agreeable to the sovereign Master of that love which we teach.

The daughter of an excellent surgeon and physician suffered from a long continued fever, and knowing that her father loved her exceedingly, she said one day to a friend of hers: "I feel much pain, but still I never think of remedies; for I know not what would cure me. I might desire one thing, and another thing might be necessary for me. Do I not gain more by leaving this care to my father, who knows, wishes, and is able to procure every thing conducive to my health? It would be painful for me to think, but he thinks sufficiently for me; it would be painful for me to wish for any thing, but he wishes for every thing serviceable to me. I have only to await what he judges expedient, and when he is near, employ myself only in testifying to him my filial love and perfect confidence." And after these words she slept, while her father, judging it proper that she should be bled, arranged what was requisite, and coming to her as soon as she awoke, after having inquired how the sleep had benefited her, asked if she would not like to be bled in order to be cured. "My father," she answered, "I am yours, I do not know what I ought to wish for, to cure me; it is for you to wish and to do for me whatever appears to you good; as for me, it is enough for me to honour and to love you with all my heart, as I always do." Her arm was then bandaged, and her father held the lance

over the vein; but neither while he pierced the flesh, nor while the blood sprang forth, did this amiable daughter cast her eyes once on the wounded arm, or the gushing blood, but, with looks fixed on her father's countenance, she only said, now and again, softly and sweetly: "My father loves me well, and I am all his." And when every thing was over, she did not thank him, but only repeated once more the self-same words of her affection and filial confidence.

Tell me, now; did not this young girl testify a more tender and sincere love towards her father, than if she had employed a great deal of time in inquiries about the remedies for her disease, in gazing on the scarlet stream, or in uttering words of gratitude? No doubt, whatever, about it. For, by thinking of herself, what would she have gained unless anxiety, since her father thought sufficiently for her? By looking on her arm, what would have resulted, unless, perhaps, to get a fright? And by thanking her father, what virtue would she have practised, but gratitude? Did she not then act better by confining her attention to some demonstrations of filial love, infinitely more agreeable to a father than any other virtue?

My eyes are always on the Lord, for he will free my feet from pits and snares. Have you fallen into the snares of trials? Regard not your misfortune; look only to God; He will have care of you. *Cast thy solicitude on him, and he will provide for thee.* Why trouble yourself by sighing or pining about the accidents of this world, since you know not what you ought to wish for, and God will always wish what is best for you? Await then, in repose of spirit, the effects of the divine good-pleasure, and let it suffice

for you, since it is always good ; so Our Lord ordered St. Catherine of Sienna, saying : " Think of Me, and I will think of thee."*

Look then, a hundred times a-day, on the loving will of God ; and placing our will in the divine will, let us exclaim devoutly : O infinitely sweet goodness ! how amiable is Thy will ! how desirable are Thy favours ! Thou hast created us for eternal life, and thy maternal breast, enlarged with the sacred paps of incomparable love, abounds in the milk of mercy, whether to forgive the penitent, or to perfect the just. Why then, should we not cast our wills into Thine, as little children nestle in the bosom of their mother, to drink in the milk of Thy eternal benedictions ?

* God takes extraordinary care of your life. You were yet an infant, borne in the bosom of your mother, and without distrust of her, affectionate as she was, He carried you in His arms. He aided you to form your first steps, and has always led you by the hand. If He permitted you to fall, it was to teach you your own weakness ; the fall has not been fatal ; you fell under His hand, and He has raised you up.

If you are tempted, He assists you ; if shaken, He steadies you ; if in sin, He endures you ; if penitent, He forgives you. You retire to rest ; He watches over you. Are you sick ? He is around your bed, on the right hand and on the left, to comfort you, whichever way you turn. There Ezechias found Him, prayed to Him, and was heard. For you He tempers the heats of the day and the evil influences of the night. Never did father so much love his children as God loves you. Your defects disfigure you in the eyes of men, who often cannot endure you ; but our heavenly Father finds His children amiable. He loves all His works ; but He singularly loves man, made to His image.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE SHOULD SERVE GOD OUR FATHER FOR LOVE.

THE SON serves as a son, and not as a slave, through fear of punishment, nor as a mercenary, through hope of recompense, but only in order to please his father, and give evidence of that love which is so deeply imprinted in the filial heart. Whence it comes that when the soul has conceived a fear of losing paradise, it passes further and exclaims: Though there were no paradise, God is my Father; He has created me, preserves me, nourishes me, gives me every thing; and therefore I wish to love, honour, and serve Him perfectly.

O gift of piety, rich present which God bestows on the heart! Blessed is he who has the dispositions of a filial heart towards the paternal heart of our heavenly Father. These are the dispositions He would have us learn from the Lord's Prayer, desiring us to address Him as Our Father who art in heaven; a name of respect, of love, and of fear.*

To show you that this gift of piety, that is to say, a filial fear, is given us by the Holy Ghost, the apostle St. Paul, writing to the Romans, says: "We

* "We owe a filial affection to God. This, the sweetest and most excellent of domestic sentiments, God claims as a Father. We are really His children. Does not St. Paul say: By the grace of regeneration and baptism we have become the children of God, and received the grace of the divine adoption?"—*Pere De Ravignan*.

have not received the spirit of fear and bondage, but the spirit of adoption of children of God, whereby we call him Father ;” as if he should say : we have become like little children near Our Lord. Little children live in great confidence ; they never think that their father either wishes to beat them, or is preparing an inheritance for them ; but only think of loving him, because they are carried in his arms, and are cherished and provided for in every way by the care of their good father. Thus ought we to act towards God, honouring Him as our most amiable Father, serving Him with love, without apprehending chastisement, or claiming remuneration, allowing ourselves to be carried in the arms of His holy Providence whithersoever He pleases.

CHAPTER XX.

· NOW JEALOUS GOD IS OF OUR HEART.

THIS jealousy is not a jealousy of covetousness, but a jealousy of the highest friendship ; for it is not His interest that we love Him, it is our own. Our love is useless to Him, but profitable to us ; and if agreeable to Him, is only so because profitable to us ; for, being the sovereign good, He is pleased to communicate Himself through love, without the possibility of receiving any good in return. Hence He cries out, complaining of sinners, in a kind of jealousy : *They have left me, the fountain of living water, and have dug to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.* See, I beg of you, how delicately our divine Spouse expresses the nobility and generosity of

His jealousy. *They have left me*, He says, *the fountain of living water*; as if He would say: I do not complain of their leaving Me, on account of any injury that I can sustain thereby; for what injury can a fountain sustain, if no one draws water from it? Does it cease to flow over the land, because abandoned? But I regret their misfortune, for, having *left Me*, they are pleased with *wells without any water*. And if, by any possibility, they could find another fountain of living water, I might easily endure their departure from Me, since I have no other wish for their love than the desire of their happiness. It is, therefore, for our own sakes He wishes we should love Him; because we cannot cease to love Him without entering on the path of our destruction, and because whatever affections we deprive Him of, we only waste.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ADMIRABLE MODEL OF PERFECT ABANDONMENT.

WE may believe that the most holy Virgin, Our Blessed Lady, derived so much contentment from carrying her dear little Jesus in her arms, that this contentment prevented weariness, or at least made it agreeable; for, if to carry a twig of "agnus-castus" refreshes travellers, what alleviation would not the glorious Mother receive from carrying the immaculate Lamb of God? And if, sometimes, she allowed Him to walk beside her, holding Him by the hand, it was not that she would not much prefer to have Him on her bosom, with His arms round her neck,

but it was because she wished to exercise Him in forming His steps, and to support Himself. And we, like our heavenly Father's little children, can also advance in two ways: first, by the steps of our own will, when we conform it to His, holding the hand of His divine will by that of our obedience, and following wherever He conducts us, that is to say, doing what He signifies to be His wish; for when He wishes anything to be done, He always gives the power to do it; and secondly, we can accompany Our Lord, without any trouble of our own, merely allowing ourselves to be carried by Him, according to the divine good-pleasure, as an infant in the arms of its mother, by an admirable agreement, which is called the union, or rather the unity, of our will with that of God.

If any one had asked the sweet Infant Jesus in the arms of His Mother whither He went, might He not reasonably have replied: I go nowhere; it is my mother who goes for me? And if He had been questioned: But, at least, do you not go with your mother? might He not reasonably have answered: No, I go nowhere, or if I go where my mother carries me, it is not by my own steps I go, but by the steps of my mother? And if the inquiry had been continued: But at least, O dear divine infant! you wish to allow yourself to be carried by your blessed mother? *No, certainly*, He might have said, *I wish for nothing of the kind*; but as my good mother travels for me, so she wishes for me; I leave to her the care of going and coming for me, as appears to her good; and as I only walk by her steps, so I only wish by her desires. When I find myself in her arms, I pay no attention to this or that, but leave

every care to my mother, except the one of resting on her bosom, of nourishing myself with her virginal milk, and of holding fast to her most amiable neck, while I lovingly kiss her *with the kisses of my mouth*. And while I enjoy the delights of these holy caresses, which surpass all expression, it seems to me that my mother is a tree of life, and that I am her fruit, or that I am her very heart in the midst of her bosom, or her soul in the midst of her heart; therefore, as her steps suffice for her and me, without my making one, so her will suffices for her and me, without my taking any concern about her going or coming; neither am I troubled, whether she goes quickly or slowly, or from one side to the other; nor do I inquire to what place she goes; being content that, whatever happens, I am in her arms, and on her virginal bosom, where *I feast myself among the lilies*. O divine Child of Mary! grant to my poor soul some of these transports of holy love. Go then, most amiable dear little Child! or rather go not, but remain resting on the bosom of Thy sweet Mother; go always with her and by her, and never go without her, so long as Thou art a Child. *Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!*

This is the manner in which we ought, like wax, to be pliable in the hands of the divine good-pleasure, not wasting our time in fretting about events, but allowing God to do for us as pleases Him, according to the words of the great Apostle: *Cast your solicitude on him, for he has care of you*. He says: *all your solicitude*, that is, both present and future; for He will have care of the success of our undertakings, and of wishing for us whatever is best.

CHAPTER XXII.

IT IS GOOD TO ABANDON ONES SELF TO PROVIDENCE.

THE Providence of God is infinite and admirable; it reaches to all things, reigns over all things, and turns all things to its glory. He who considers well the doings of Providence, the daily and universal commerce which creatures carry on, with such extraordinary harmony, for the service of man, must be moved with a thousand loving emotions towards the supreme wisdom, and cry out: Thy Providence, O eternal Father, governs us most wonderfully!

First, God furnishes men with all means necessary to attain their end. The visible sun communicates his light and heat to the universe; without him, there would be neither worth nor beauty in the world; he is the universal principle of life to inferior things, giving them the vigour they require. In like manner, the divine goodness animates all souls to gain their salvation, and encourages all hearts to its love and service, without any one being able to hide from its celestial influences. With this intention God made us to His own image and likeness at creation, and made Himself to our image and likeness at the incarnation, after which He suffered death, to redeem the whole human race and re-instate it in life.

We ought, indeed, a hundred times a-day, to cast our eyes on the loving Providence of God, who has His heart always turned towards us by foresight, as

we should have ours always turned towards Him by confidence; and, placing our hearts in His divine will, we should cry out devoutly: O infinitely sweet goodness! how amiable is Thy will! how desirable are Thy favours! Thou hast created us for eternal life, and Thy maternal breast, enlarged with the sacred paps of incomparable love, abounds in the milk of mercy, whether to forgive the penitent, or to perfect the just. Why, then, do we not hang our wills on Thine, as little children nestle themselves in the bosom of their mothers, to drink the milk of Thy eternal benedictions? Oh! how true it is that God is a thousand and a thousand times more worthy of being loved than He is loved!*

My God! what pleasure should our understanding take in the frequent thought of Thy divinity, since it is so good, so sweet, so beautiful, so kind towards all, so willing to communicate itself! Would it not be happy to love of necessity this infinite beauty and incomprehensible Goodness, as is done by the blessed spirits, who are constrained by a most sweet and inevitable necessity, to love it eternally?

Ah, how much God loves us! how sweetly He protects and guides us! He wishes us to be entirely His; let us not seek, then, other arms to rest in than those of His Providence; let us not cast our looks

* "*Be not solicitous, or uneasy, says the Saviour; consider how the raven, one of the most voracious birds, nevertheless, without barns or provisions, without sowing or labouring, finds its nourishment. God supplies what is needful for it and its little ones who invoke him, says the Psalmist. God hears their cries, though harsh and discordant, and nourishes them as well as the nightingales and others whose voices are sweeter and more harmonious.*"—*Bossuet.*

elsewhere ; let us repose our mind on Him alone ; let us keep our will united to His, that His and ours may be only one ; let us wish sweetly whatever He wishes ; let us allow Him to govern us ; let us not reflect so much upon ourselves ; let us for ever live on the mercy of His Providence ; all will go well when our soul has no other retreat than in God, and the train of our affairs will succeed more prosperously when He assists us. Can the child perish, who is in the arms of an Almighty Father ?

Desire nothing ; resign your cares to Divine Providence ; allow God to do with you whatever He pleases, as little children surrender themselves to their nurses. Let Him carry you on His right arm, or on His left, as He chooses ; an infant does not take offence at either ; if He would lay you down, or lift you up, permit Him, for, like a good nurse, He knows better than ourselves what we need. I mean to say that if Divine Providence permits trials or afflictions to befall you, refuse them not, but accept them willingly, tranquilly, and lovingly ; if He permits them not, desire them not ; and thus you will keep your heart always prepared for the divine dispensations.

Every one knows how to be resigned amid the joys and happiness of prosperity, but to be so amid storms and tempests is peculiar to the children of God. Let the heavens combine against me, let the earth and the elements rebel, let every creature declare war against my existence, I fear not ; it is enough for me that God is with me, and I with Him.

Let Our Lord turn and push us to the right or to the left ; let Him, as with new Jacobs, hold us fast, and give us a hundred turns ; let him force us some-

times on one side, sometimes on the other; in a word, let Him deal us a thousand injuries; yet we will not let Him go, until He gives us His eternal benediction. Thus our good God will never abandon us, unless to hold us better; He will never leave us, unless to guard us better; He will never wrestle with us, unless to yield to us and bless us.

O God! what a happiness to be thus resigned to the good-pleasure of our sweet Saviour, by an abandonment of our whole being to His holy Providence! How happy should we be, if, submitting our will to that of God, we would adore it equally in times of tribulation and of consolation, assured that all events proceed from His divine hand for our advantage, to purify and refine us in holy charity!

Let us, therefore, embark on the sea of Divine Providence, without biscuit, without oars, without sails, in a word, without any supplies; let us leave the care of our affairs to Our Lord, without any fear; His goodness will provide sufficiently for all.*

Our Lord has taught me from my youth to confide in Providence, and if I were to be born again I would desire to be governed, even in the least things, by

* The following beautiful lines were written by St. Francis de Sales to a nun: "Yesterday, I crossed the lake in a little boat, to visit the Archbishop of Vienne. I was very much at home to have no other support than a thin plank, as I could rest more securely on holy Providence; and I was still more comfortable in being under obedience there to the ferry-man, who ordered us all to be seated, and to keep steady, without stirring, as seemed good to him to be done, and indeed, I did not move. But, my daughter, do not take these words as of any great value: no, they are only little imaginations of virtues that my heart makes to recreate itself; when there is real danger, I am not so brave."

His holy Providence, with the simplicity of a child, and with a profound contempt for all human prudence. It is a great enjoyment to me to walk with eyes closed, under the guidance of Providence, whose designs are impenetrable, but are always sweet and amiable to those who confide in them. Let us leave our soul, then, in the barque of Providence; it will conduct us safely to port. Happy are they who confide in him who as God is able, as a Father is willing, to grant us every thing good; miserable, on the contrary, are they who trust in creatures: which promise great things, give little, and make the purchaser pay dearly for the little they give.

Since the Providence of God is such as we have described it, let us belong in such a manner to God, that we may belong to no one else; for no one can serve two masters.

Should we not be content to leave our life, and all that we possess, to the pure disposal of this adorable Providence? For we are no longer our own, but the property of Him, who, to make us His, was pleased, in so loving a manner, to become entirely ours.

Providence defers its assistance only to excite our confidence. If our heavenly Father does not always grant what we ask, it is to keep us near Him, and to give us occasion of pressing Him by a loving violence, as He showed well to the two pilgrims of Emmaus, with whom He would not have tarried, only that as the day was drawing to a close, they prevailed on Him.

Let nothing separate us from His holy love; let our heart, whether languishing, or dying, or living, have never any life but in Him, and for

Him, and let Him be for ever the God of our heart.

Let the storm and the tempest come; you shall not perish; you are with Jesus. If fear seize on you, cry out: O Saviour! save me! He will reach out His hand; grasp it, and proceed joyfully, without philosophizing on your mishap. So long as St. Peter had confidence, the tempest could not harm him; when he feared, he sank. Fear is often a greater danger than the danger itself.

As for me, there are times when it appears to me that I have not strength to resist, and that if an occasion presented itself, I should succumb; but I only place my confidence the more in God, and hold as certain, that in presence of the occasion God will support me with His strength, and that I shall destroy my enemies as so many little lambkins.

When you feel that, on account of the multitude of your imperfections, confidence is wanting to you to have recourse to Our Lord, let the superior part of your soul rejoice, using some words of hope and love to Our Lord, with more earnestness and more frequency than usual.

Be very careful not to become disturbed after having fallen into any fault, nor to yield to compassionate emotions over yourself, which proceed from pride; but humble yourself promptly before God, with a sweet and loving humility, that will lead you to have recourse confidently and immediately to His goodness, being assured of His assistance to you to amend.

When you fall, prostrate yourself before God to say to Him in a spirit of confidence and humility: Mercy! O Lord! for I am weak! Raise us up again.

in peace, and join again the thread of Thy love, to continue Thy work. We have imperfections; but it is necessary to be content with being men and not angels, to despise temptations, to go forward without regard to them, and to banish diffidence by the thought that God is more merciful than we are miserable. Suffer, undisturbed, the want of sensible consolation, a single act of virtue made in time of aridity being of much more value than many made with a stronger, though less agreeable love. In fine, make a peaceful abandonment of yourself to Providence in the various occurrences of life, and even in the presence of death. God has watched over you until the present, hold fast by the hand of His Providence, and He will assist you; and, where you cannot walk, He will carry you.

I hope that God will strengthen you more and more; and, at the thought, or rather temptation, that your present fervour will not continue, answer once for all that those who confide in God shall never be confounded, and that as you have cast, both for soul and body, your care on the Lord, He will not fail to provide for you. Let us serve God well to-day; He will take care of to-morrow. Every day should carry its own burden. Have no anxiety about to-morrow; for God who reigns to-day will reign to-morrow. Either He will not send you adversity, or if He will send it, He will give you an invincible courage to meet it. If assaulted by temptations, desire not to be freed from them. It is good that we should experience them, in order to have an opportunity of combating them, and of gaining victories. This serves as an exercise in the most excellent virtues, thus grounded deeply in the soul.

Moreover, keep your eyes lifted up to God ; erect your courage on holy humility, strengthen it in meekness, confirm it in equanimity ; let your mind be ever master of its inclinations ; and allow no apprehensions to seize upon your heart. You have already passed through many dangers, and it was by the grace of God you did so ; the same grace will be near you on all succeeding occasions, and will deliver you from difficulties, one after another, though an angel from heaven should be required to guide your wavering steps.

Cast not your eyes on your infirmities and insufficiencies, unless to become more humble : never to be discouraged. Often look on your right hand to God and the two angels whom He has appointed to you : one for your own person, another for the direction of your little family. Say to these holy angels : Sirs, how shall we act ? Beseech them to furnish you with a knowledge of the divine will, and to contemplate the inspirations which Our Lady would wish you to receive from her paps of love. Regard not the variety of imperfections that live in you, and in all those persons whom Our Lord and Our Lady have confided to you, unless to increase in a holy fear of offending God, but never to be surprised ; for it is not a wonderful thing that each herb and flower in a garden should require a particular kind of care.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FEAR AND HOPE.

To walk securely in this life, we must always walk between fear and hope: between fear of the judgments of God, *which are unfathomable abysses*, and hope of His mercies, which are without number or measure, and *over all His works*.

We must fear the divine judgments, but without discouragement, and be encouraged at the sight of the mercies of God, without presumption.

Those who entertain an extreme and inordinate dread of being damned, show that they have more need of humility and submission, than of understanding. We must indeed abase, annihilate, and lose our soul, but only to exalt, preserve, and save it. That humility which is prejudicial to charity is undoubtedly a false humility.

Whatever leads to discouragement, to despair, to trouble, is contrary to charity, which teaches us to make every effort, though *with fear and trembling*, but never to distrust the goodness of God, who wills all men to be saved, and to come to penance.

We serve a Master who is rich in mercy to those who invoke Him; He cancels a debt of ten thousand talents on a very brief petition. We must have sentiments worthy of His goodness, yet serve Him with fear; but while we tremble, we must not cease to rejoice: that humility which discourages is not a good humility.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WILL PERFECTLY RESIGNED.

IMAGINE you behold the glorious and ever-admirable St. Louis setting sail for a foreign land, and the Queen his wife embarking with his Majesty. Suppose that some one inquires of this heroic princess: Where are you going, madam? She would undoubtedly answer: I am going wherever the King is going. But do you know where the King is going? She would say: He has told me in general; yet I have no anxiety to know where he is going, but only to go with him. Then, madam, you have no special purpose in this voyage? No, she would reply: I have no other than that of being with my dear lord and husband. The other might add: See, he goes to Egypt, to pass to Palestine; he will stay at Damascus, at Acre, and at many other places; do you not intend, madam, to reside there also? No, indeed, she would say, I have no intention unless to be near my King, and the places he will visit are of no consideration to me, unless inasmuch as he will be there; I shall go, without desiring to go, for I care about nothing but the presence of the King; it is the King who desires the voyage, and as for me, I desire no voyage but only the presence of the King; journeys, delays, and every thing else, being quite indifferent to me. Thus, a will resigned to that of its God should have no other desire than simply to follow the will of God.

As he who sails on board a ship does not advance by his own motion, but by the motion of the vessel, so the heart embarked on board the divine good-pleasure should have no other wish than that of being carried by the will of God. Then, no more will the heart be heard to say: Thy will be done, not mine; for it will no longer have any will to renounce; but it will say these words: Lord! into Thy hands I commend my will; as if its will were no more at its own disposal, but only at that of the Divine Providence.

Among all the pleasures of perfect love, that which is found in the acquiescence of the soul to spiritual tribulations is unquestionably the purest and most refined. The Blessed Angela of Foligno gives us an admirable description of the interior pains which she sometimes endured: she says that her soul was in torment, like a man with his hands and feet tied, hanging by the neck between life and death, yet not strangled; without any hope of succour; unable to support himself with his feet, to assist himself with his hands, to cry out with his mouth, or even to sigh. It is really so; the soul is sometimes so pressed with interior afflictions, that all its powers and faculties are crushed, and desolated by the absence of every thing that could solace it, as well as by the dread and apprehension of every thing that could sadden it. To such an extent, that, after the example of its Saviour, it begins to grow weary, to fear, to shudder, then to be sad with a sadness like that of the dying, when it can well exclaim: "*my soul is sorrowful even unto death;*" and, with the consent of its whole interior, it desires,

implores, and beseeches, that, "if it be possible, this chalice may pass away from it," remaining attached only by the finest point of the spirit to the heart and good-pleasure of God, and making one simple act of acquiescence: "O eternal Father, may my will be never done, but Thine!" And it is remarkable that the soul makes this act of resignation in the midst of so much trouble, so many repugnances and contradictions, that it does not perceive itself doing so; at least it imagines that its acts are all so languid that they cannot come from the heart, or be of any value, because what is regarded then as the divine good-pleasure is endured not only without pleasure or contentment, but even contrary to the pleasure and contentment of the heart, which love allows to utter all the lamentations of Job and Jeremiah, but on condition that one act of acquiescence should be made in the inmost depths, in the purest part of the soul. And this acquiescence is not sweet, or tender, or sensible, though it is real, and strong, and loving; it seems to have retired into the furthest corner of the soul, or, as it were, into the citadel of the fortress, where it remains courageous, though all the rest has fallen, and is overwhelmed with sadness. And the more removed this love is from aid, abandoned by the faculties of the soul, the more sublime is its constancy, and the nobler its fidelity.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LOVE OF SUBMISSION, BY WHICH OUR WILL IS UNITED TO THE GOOD-PLEASURE OF GOD.

WE do not conform ourselves to the divine will of good-pleasure in the same manner as to the signified will of God; for the will of good-pleasure has no need of our obedience in order to be accomplished: without us, and in spite of us, it will always be done. Nevertheless, we can honour it, and unite ourselves to it, by submitting to what it ordains; when love induces us to submit to it, we call it the love of submission.

But this union and conformity with the divine good-pleasure is made, either by a holy resignation, or by a most holy indifference.

Resignation is practised by way of effort: we would rather live than die; nevertheless, since it is the will of God that we should die, we are content. We would like to live if it were pleasing to God; and, moreover, we would like it to please God to let us live. We die willingly, but we would live much more willingly; we pass away satisfied, but we would remain much better satisfied. Job, in his sorrows, displayed this resignation. "If we have received good things," he says, "from the Lord, why should we not also receive evil things?" He speaks of supporting and enduring trials. "As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord." These are words of acceptance and resignation, uttered by way of patience and endurance.

This resignation is agreeable to God, for the love which produces it is great; but it attains its highest excellence, when we *cherish, love, and embrace* sufferings, on account of the divine good-pleasure which sends them to us.*

* "I am acquainted with your state, and my soul, far from being afflicted, is dilated with joy. Never was my heart so much united to yours before. Remain, then, a victim to Providence, by an entire abandonment, since God has chosen you for the object of his delights. What He wishes to do with you is good, and He will draw His glory from all. God makes use of what men call imprudence to conduct us to His ends, and to prove the purity of our love. He who abandons himself unreservedly to God on the most trying occasions, gives the highest testimony that a creature can give of a sincere love. To act in this manner, is to become, in Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God. Far from compassionating, I envy you. Peace of heart and resignation change torments into delights."—*Spiritual Letters*.

SECOND BOOK.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON TRIALS OF AN INTERIOR LIFE,
INFIRMITIES OF SOUL AND BODY, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

MAXIMS FOR PERSEVERANCE IN PIETY IN THE MIDST
OF AFFLICTIONS.

To live constantly in devotion, we have only to establish sound principles or maxims in our soul.

The first which I desire you to adopt is that of St. Paul: "All things work together for good to those who love God." And truly, since God is able and understands how to draw good from evil, for whom will He be disposed to do so, if not for those who give themselves unreservedly to Him? Even sins, which God in His goodness has forbidden, are changed by the Divine Providence to the good of those who belong to Him. David would not have been so full of humility if he had not sinned, nor Magdalen of love for her Saviour if He had not forgiven her many sins: and never would He have forgiven them, if she had not committed them.

Behold the great dispenser of mercy: He changes our miseries into favours, and from the adder of our

iniquities, makes a salutary balm for our souls. Tell me, then, I pray, what will He not do with our afflictions, our labours, our persecutions? If it happens that something grieves you, no matter from what quarter it comes, be assured that while you love God, all will turn to your good. And though you cannot see the means by which this good will come, be assured that it will come. If God places the bandage of ignominy over your eyes, it will be to render you an admirable sight, a spectacle of honour. If He permits you to fall, like St. Paul, whom He cast to the earth, it will be to raise you up with glory.

The second maxim is, that God is your Father; otherwise, He would not command you to say: Our Father, who art in heaven. And what have you to fear, being the child of such a Father, without whose providence not a hair of your head can fall? It is wonderful, that, being the children of such a Father, we have, or could have, any other anxiety than to love and serve Him. Have the care He wishes you to have of yourself and your family, and no more; you will then see that He will have care of you. "Think of me," He said to St. Catherine of Sienna, "and I will think of thee." "O eternal Father!" says the Wise Man, "Thy Providence directs all things."

Do not look forward to the occurrences of this life with fear, but accept them with perfect confidence that, as they happen, God will protect and deliver you; He has guarded you until the present, hold fast by the hand of His Providence, and He will assist you on all occasions: and where you cannot walk, He will carry you. What should you fear, belonging

to God, who has so emphatically assured us, that *all things work together for good to those who love Him?*

The true servant of God is not solicitous about the morrow; he performs faithfully what God requires of him to-day, and will perform what God will require of him to-morrow, and the same the next day, and the next day, without a word. Thus he unites his will, not to the means of serving God, but to the service and good-pleasure of God. *Be not solicitous about the morrow, and say not: What shall we eat? or wherewith shall we be clothed? or how shall we live? For your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things; seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.* This extends to spiritual, as well as to temporal things.

Remain in peace, remove from your imagination whatever can trouble it, and say frequently to Our Lord: *O God, Thou art my God, and I will confide in Thee; Thou wilt aid me, and be my refuge, and I shall fear nothing; for Thou art not only with me, but Thou art in me, and I in Thee.*

Your third maxim should be that which Our Lord taught His apostles: has anything been wanting to you? Our Lord had sent His apostles to various places, without silver, without staff, without shoes, without scrip, with only one coat, and afterwards He said to them: when I sent you thus, was anything wanting to you? And they said: no. Still more, when you endured afflictions, even when you had little confidence in God, did you perish in those afflictions? You will answer: no. And why, then, have you not courage to advance in spite of all other

adversities? God has not abandoned you until the present; how will He abandon you henceforward, since now more than ever you desire to belong to Him?

Fear not evil to come upon you from this world; for, perhaps, such evil will never happen, and even if it should happen, God will strengthen you. He commanded St. Peter to walk upon the waves; and St. Peter, seeing the winds and the storm, was afraid; and fear sank him; he sought the assistance of his Master, who said: Man of little faith! why didst thou doubt? And reaching out His hand, Our Lord helped him. If God requires you to walk on the waves of adversity, fear not, doubt not, God will be with you; have good courage and you shall be delivered.

The fourth maxim is: eternity. It matters little how these transitory moments pass, provided I enjoy eternally the glory of God. We advance into eternity, already we have one foot there; provided it be a happy eternity for us, what matter about these fleeting moments of pain? Are we aware that our tribulations of two or three days prepare for us innumerable eternal consolations, and yet shall we be unwilling to support them?

The fifth maxim is that of the Apostle: "God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of my Jesus." Plant the cross of Jesus Christ crucified in your heart, and all the crosses of this world will appear to you as so many roses. Those who have once been pierced with the thorns of the crown of Our Lord, who is our head, can scarcely ever feel any other thorns.

I have noticed in doves that they mourn as they

rejoice; that they sing the same air, as well for their canticles of jubilation, as for those in which they plaintively lament their dolours; that whether joyful or sad, they never change their tune; it is always the same low rumbling murmur.

This is that holy evenness of mind which we should endeavour to possess; I do not say evenness of fancy, or of inclination, but of mind; for we need not make any account of the annoyances raised by the inferior part of our soul, whence all whims and inquietudes proceed, stirred up by the senses and passions, when the superior part of the soul does not perform its duty of being master, or when it does not keep good watch against the assaults and disturbances of its enemies, to make war upon them and subject them to its laws. I say that we must always remain firm and resolute in the superior part of our soul, for whose fidelity we make profession, and preserve a constant equanimity through favourable and unfavourable circumstances, in desolation as well as in consolation.

The holy man Job furnishes us with an example in point; for when God multiplied favours upon him, gave him children, and sent him every thing he could desire in this life, he always returned the same thanks. What did he say but: Blessed be the name of the Lord? This was his canticle of love which he sang on every occasion. See him reduced to the extremity of affliction: how does he act? He sings his canticle of lamentation to the same air which he had used in the days of his joy. "We have received good things," he says, "from the hand of the Lord: why should we not also receive evil things. The Lord gave me children and possessions; the Lord has

taken them away: blessed be the name of the Lord!" No other canticle at any time than, Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Oh, how like was this holy soul to the dove, which always rejoices and mourns in the same soft notes! Thus should we act; thus should we receive prosperity and adversity, consolations and afflictions, from the hand of the Lord, always singing the same sweet song: blessed be the holy name of God! and to the air of an unchangeable equanimity.

Let us not act like those who weep when consolation is absent, and do nothing but sing when it has returned: in which they resemble certain animals, that grow morose and furious when the weather is wet and gloomy, but never cease to skip and gambol when it is beautiful and serene.

CHAPTER II.

WHENCE OUR MISERIES COME

Our first misery is that we esteem ourselves; if we fall into any sin or imperfection, we are astonished, troubled, impatient, simply because we thought there was something good, resolute, solid, within us; and, therefore, when we find that there was no such thing, we are grieved and offended at having deceived ourselves. If we knew ourselves as we really are, instead of being amazed to see ourselves prostrate on the ground, we should be surprised to see ourselves stand for a single day, or even for one hour.

Endeavour to perform your actions perfectly, and having done this, think no more about them; but

think of what you have yet to do, advancing with simplicity in the way of God, without tormenting your mind. It is necessary to detest your defects, not with a detestation of trouble and vexation, but with a tranquil detestation, to behold them with patience, and to make them serve to lower you in your own esteem. Regard your faults with more compassion than indignation, more humility than severity, and preserve your heart full of a sweet, calm, peaceful love.

Our second misery is, that we love ourselves; if we have not sensible consolations, we are sad; if we meet with some difficulties in our just undertakings, we are filled with uneasiness to overcome them, because we are attached to our consolations, our comfort, and our convenience. We only wish for honey in the service of God, and do not look to Jesus prostrate on the earth, sweating blood through the effect of His interior desolation. We refuse to understand that as dry jams are the best, so the actions we perform in dryness are more meritorious in the sight of God than those which we perform in consolation.

God does not wish that we should enjoy the luxury of our faith, our hope, or our charity, unless an absolute necessity requires it; we possess those virtues, nevertheless, but we are like a child, deprived by its tutor of the management of its possessions. How happy we are to be thus weaned and deterred by our celestial Tutor! It is our duty to adore this amiable Providence, by casting ourselves into its arms. No, Lord! I do not wish for the enjoyment of my faith, my hope, or my charity, unless to say to Thee in truth, though without sensible satisfaction,

that I would rather die than forsake my faith, my hope, or my charity. Lord! if it be Thy good-pleasure that I experience no pleasure in the practice of virtue, I acquiesce therein with all my will.

Whenever any pain befalls us, we must receive it with calm submission to the good-pleasure of God. When any matter of joy happens to us, we must receive it peacefully, with moderation of mind, and without being too much elated.

CHAPTER III.

CONDUCT TO BE OBSERVED IN INTERIOR TRIALS.

It is an ordinary thing with those who begin to serve God, and who have not yet had experience of the withdrawal of grace, or of other spiritual vicissitudes, that as soon as they lose the feeling of sensible devotion, and the perception of that beautiful light which had invited them to run in the ways of God, they immediately lose breath, as it were, and fall into very great sadness and pusillanimity. Persons well versed in the matter give this explanation: they say that a reasonable being cannot remain for a long time famishing, and without any pleasure, heavenly or earthly; but as souls elevated above themselves by the taste of superior pleasures easily renounce all visible objects, so, when, by the divine appointment, this spiritual joy is taken away from them, they find they are also deprived of inferior consolations, and not being yet accustomed to await patiently the return of day, it seems to them that they are neither in heaven nor on earth, but that

they are to lie buried in a perpetual night; in such a manner that, like little children who have just been weaned, and who still seek their mother's breast, they can only weep and languish, being a trouble to every one, but particularly to themselves.

Not to fall into discouragement, remark:—

1. That God usually gives some foretaste of heavenly delights to those who enter into His service, in order to withdraw them from the pleasures of the world, and to encourage them in the pursuit of divine love: as a mother, to accustom her little infant to the breast, puts some honey there.

2. That, nevertheless, this good God, by an arrangement of His wisdom, sometimes takes away the milk and honey of His consolations, that we may learn to eat the dry and substantial bread of a severe devotion, practised in the midst of disgusts and agitations.*

3. That great temptations often arise during times of aridity; when we must fight continually against the temptations, for they are not of God, but endure patiently the aridity, since He appoints it for our trial.

4. That we should never lose courage in the midst of interior pains, nor say: I shall never be joyful; for at night we should expect the light, and, on the other hand, at the brightest spiritual time, we should not say: I shall never be sad; for, as the Wise Man observes, in happy days we should remember the

* "As for imperfect souls, to whom sensible consolations are not granted according to their desires, they trouble themselves unprofitably; perfection does not consist in those enjoyments, but in the love of God; and our reward will only be so much the greater, as we shall have acted in all things with more justice and truth."—*St. Teresa.*

unhappy; we must hope in pain, and fear in prosperity; in both be humble.

5. I perceive that all the seasons of the year are to be found in your soul: sometimes winter, with sterility, distractions, torments, disgusts, and weariness; sometimes the roses of May, with the sweet scent of holy little flowers; sometimes the heats of desire to please our good God. There only remains autumn, when, as you say, you do not find much fruit, but it often happens that, in threshing the wheat and pressing the grapes, we find much more than the harvest and the vintage had promised. You would like always to have spring-time or summer; but it is necessary to have a change internally, as well as externally. In heaven, there will be a perpetual spring as to beauty, a perpetual autumn as to joy, a perpetual summer as to love. There will be no winter there; but here, winter is required for the exercise of self-denial, and for the growth of a thousand beautiful virtues which flourish only in sterility. Let us, then, make our little steps forward; if we have a good and resolute affection, we cannot but advance well. It is not necessary for the practice of virtues to be always attentive to them all. That would entangle and perplex your thoughts too much. Humility and charity are the antiphonarians; all the other virtues are annexed to them. The preservation of a house depends on the foundation and the roof; if we attend to which, the rest will give us no great difficulty. Humility and charity are the mothers of virtues; the others follow them, as little chickens do the hens.

6. That it is a sovereign remedy, to discover our trouble to some wise friend who can solace us.

Finally. To conclude a warning that is necessary, I will remark that, in interior trials, as in all other things, our good God and our enemy have very different views; God makes use of these pains to guide us to great purity of heart, to an entire renunciation of our own interest in what concerns His service, and to a perfect stripping of ourselves, while the devil endeavours by these sufferings to make us lose courage, to make us return to sensual pleasures, and to make us wearisome both to ourselves and others, that holy-devotion may be decried and defamed. But if you observe the instructions I have given you, you will greatly increase in perfection by the endurance of interior afflictions, of which, before concluding, I must say another little word. Sometimes disgusts, sterilities, and aridities, proceed from indisposition of the body; as when by excessive watches, labours, and fasts, we are overwhelmed with fatigue, and weighed down by drowsiness, head-ache, and other such infirmities, which, though they depend on the body, do not fail to inconvenience the soul, on account of the strict union that exists between both. Yet, in this state, we should always be careful to elicit many acts of virtue, though in the summit of the soul, and with our superior will. For, though our soul is asleep, as it were, through weariness, that does not prevent the operations of our spirit from being most agreeable to God; and we may say to Him with the sacred spouse: *I sleep, but my heart watcheth.* Lastly, if there is less pleasure in labouring thus, there is, as I have already said, more merit and virtue. As for the remedy, it is to strengthen the body by granting it some alleviation and fitting recreation. Thus St. Francis ordered his

religious to moderate their labours in such a manner, that fervour of spirit might not be impeded.

And, speaking of this glorious father, he was once attacked and agitated by so dreadful a melancholy, that he could not hinder it from appearing externally; for if he wished to converse with his religious, he could not; if he withdrew from them, he was still worse; abstinence and macerations reduced him to a shadow; prayer did not comfort him in the least. He remained in this state for two years, so that he seemed to be altogether abandoned by God. But at last, after humbly enduring this wild tempest, the Saviour restored to him, in one moment, a full and blessed tranquillity. Thus, the greatest servants of God are subject to these rude shocks, and others should not be surprised if they sometimes get one too.

CHAPTER IV.

PERPLEXITY OF THE HEART WHICH LOVES WITHOUT KNOWING WHETHER IT IS LOVED.

It sometimes happens that we have no consolation in the exercises of holy love; so much so, that, like deaf religious, we can neither hear our voice in the choir, nor enjoy the sweetness of our chant; moreover, we are annoyed with a thousand fears, disturbed by a tremendous hurly-burly which the enemy raises round our heart, suggesting to us that perhaps we are not agreeable to our Master, and that our love is useless, or even false and vain, since it produces no consolation. We labour, then, not only

without pleasure, but with extreme difficulty, seeing neither the good of our labour, nor any content that it can afford to Him for whom we labour.

But what increases the misery is, that the mind and reason cannot give us any kind of relief; for the superior part of the soul, being completely surrounded by the suggestions of the enemy, is in the greatest alarm, and is kept busy in guarding against being surprised by any consent to evil; so that it cannot make a sortie to set free the inferior part of the soul. And though it does not lose courage, yet it is so fiercely assaulted, that, if it is without blame, it is not without pain; for, to fill up the cup of its misfortune, it is deprived of that general consolation which accompanies nearly all the other afflictions of this world, namely, the hope that they will soon end; the heart, in these spiritual conflicts, falling into a kind of inability to think of their termination, and, consequently, being unconsoled by hope. Faith, indeed, residing in the summit of the soul, assures us that this trouble will end, and that we shall one day enjoy repose; but the terrific noise and shout, raised by the enemy throughout the inferior part of the soul, almost drown the voice of faith, with its warnings and encouragements; leaving only on the imagination this sad reflection: "I shall never be happy."

Alas! how afflicted is the poor heart, when it seems abandoned by love, which it seeks for everywhere, and cannot find! We do not find it in the exterior senses, for they are incapable of retaining it; nor in the imagination, which is cruelly tormented by a variety of impressions; nor in the reason, which is troubled with a thousand obscure lights and strange

apprehensions; but at last we find it in the very summit of the soul, where it has all the while been residing; yet we do not recognise it, and it does not appear to be itself, because the greatness of the darkness and sorrow prevents us from perceiving its beauty. We see it without remembering it, and meet it without knowing it, as in a dream. Thus Magdalen, meeting her dear Master, did not derive any consolation from doing so, for she did not think it was He, but only the gardener.

Ah! what can the soul, do in this state? It knows not how to exist amid so many enemies, and has strength only to let its will die in the will of God, imitating the sweet Jesus, who, having arrived at the height of sufferings on the cross, which His Father had prepared for Him, did as the stag does, when, out of breath and overtaken by the hounds, it comes at last to bay, the tear in its eye. For thus the divine Saviour, approaching His death, and heaving His last sigh, with a loud cry and abundance of tears, said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:" words which were His last, and by which the well-beloved Son gave the highest proof of His love to His Father. When, then, every thing fails us, when our exhaustion is extreme, these words, this abandonment of our soul into the hands of our Saviour, cannot fail us. The Son recommends His spirit to His Father in His last and incomparable distress; and we, racked in the convulsions of interior pains, destitute of comfort, unable to live, surrender our spirit into the hands of the Eternal Son, who is our true Father, and bowing down our head in acquiescence to His good-pleasure, resign our whole will to Him.

CHAPTER V.

MEANS TO PRESERVE PEACE OF SOUL IN TIME OF TRIAL.

NOTHING disturbs us so much as self-love and self-esteem. If our heart does not overflow with tender emotions, if our mind does not teem with sublime sentiments, if our soul is not inundated with exquisite sweetness, we are sad; if anything difficult is to be done, if any obstacle opposes our just designs, behold us in a state of precipitation to have it overcome, and we are overcome ourselves by the precipitation. Why is this so? Undoubtedly, because we are too much attached to our comfort, our ease, our convenience. We would wish to say our prayers in a region of *Eau-de-Cologne*, and practise heroic virtue eating sugar-cake; but we do not consider the *meek Jesus, prostrate on the earth, sweating blood*, through the dreadful combat that rages in His interior, between the feelings of the inferior part of His soul and the resolutions of the superior part.

Hence it happens that when we fall into any fault or sin, we are astonished, troubled, and impatient. We only desire consolations, and are unwilling to put a finger on our misery, our weakness, or our nothingness.*

* "The sight of ourselves causes trouble, which is the just punishment of our self-love.

"On the contrary, the sight of God gives peace, which is the recompense of pure love, and a foretaste of paradise."—*Fenelon*.

Were we to do a few things, we should find peace: let us have a pure intention to seek on all occasions the honour and glory of God; let us perform the little we can for this object, according to the advice of our spiritual father, and leave the rest to God. Why should he who has God for the object of his intentions, and who does what he can, torment himself? Why should he trouble himself? What has he to fear? No, no, God is not so terrible to those who love Him; He is content with a little, for He knows that we have not much.

And know that Our Lord is called in Scripture the *Prince of Peace*, and hence, wherever He is absolute Master, He preserves peace. It is nevertheless true, that, before establishing peace in any place, He first makes war there, separating the heart and soul from their dearest and most intimate affections, such as immoderate love of one's self, confidence and complacency in one's self, and other like evils. When Our Lord separates us from these cherished and favourite passions, it seems as if He excoriated our living heart, and we are filled with the most bitter sentiments; we can hardly prevent our whole soul from discussing its misfortune, so sensible is this separation.

But all this disputation of mind is not inconsistent with peace, when, though almost submerged by desolation, we still keep our will resigned to that of Our Lord, nailed to His divine good-pleasure, and cease not from the performance of our duties, but fulfil them courageously. Of which Our Lord gives as an example in the Garden; for, overwhelmed with interior and exterior affliction, He resigned His heart sweetly into His Father's will, saying: *not my*

will, but thine be done, and ceased not, great as was His anguish, to visit and admonish His disciples. To preserve peace in the midst of war, and sweetness in the midst of bitterness, is indeed worthy of the Prince of Peace.

From what I have just said, I desire you to draw three conclusions: first, that we often imagine peace to be lost, because we are in pain, while it is not lost, as may easily be known by the fact that we still wish to renounce ourselves, to depend on the good-pleasure of God, and to fulfil the duties of our state; second, that we must of necessity endure interior pain, while God tears away the last remnant of the old man, to *renovate us in the new man who is created according to God*, and therefore we should not be troubled, or suppose that we have fallen into disgrace with Our Lord; third, that all those thoughts which cause vexation and agitation of mind cannot proceed from God, who is the Prince of Peace, but are temptations of the enemy, and therefore to be rejected and disregarded.

Humility enables us to view our imperfections undisturbed, remembering those of others. For why should we be more perfect than others? In like manner, it enables us to view the imperfections of others without trouble, remembering our own. For why should we think it strange that others have imperfections, when we have them ourselves? Humility makes our heart meek towards the perfect and the imperfect, towards the former through reverence, towards the latter through compassion. Humility helps us to receive sufferings meekly, knowing that we deserve them, and favours reverently, knowing that we do not deserve them. As to the

exterior, I approve of your making every day some act of humility, either in word or deed: I mean by words coming from the heart, such as words humbling you to an inferior; in deed, as by performing some little office or service for the house or for individuals.

I would like you to read Chapter XLI. of the *Way of Perfection* by the blessed mother, St. Teresa, for it will aid you to understand what I have so often said, that we must not cavil too much about the practice of virtues, but approach them valiantly, honestly, freely, in a *bona fide* way: I dread the unreasonably screwed-up spirit of restraint and melancholy. No, I desire you to have a great and generous heart in the service of Our Lord, yet to be humble, meek, and sincere.

For want of this, our imperfections, which we view so narrowly, trouble us much, and are thus retained; for nothing preserves them better than anxiety and uneasiness to remove them.

CHAPTER VI.

TO ATTAIN PERFECTION WE MUST ENDURE OUR
IMPERFECTION.

THE feast of the Purification has no octave; it should continue our whole life.

We must have our mind settled on two points: one, to expect the growth of weeds in our garden; the other, to have courage to witness their removal, and to lend a hand ourselves. For self-love will not die as long as we live, and it is the origin of all those unwelcome productions. Man carries himself every-

where about with him, finds himself everywhere, and misery is attached to him as a shadow to the body.

According to the general opinion of good people, you should suspect all those desires which cannot be followed by their effects. Such are the desires of a certain Christian perfection which may be imagined, but cannot be practised, and of which many can give lessons, but none a specimen.

Know that the virtue of patience is that which secures us the greatest perfection; and if we must have patience with others, we must also have it with ourselves. Those who aspire to the pure love of God, have more need of patience with themselves than with others.

To attain perfection, we must endure our imperfection. I say: we must suffer it with patience, not love or cherish it; humility is fortified in suffering.

We must acknowledge the truth: we are miserable creatures, who can scarcely do any good; but God, who is infinitely good, is content with our little works, and the preparation of our heart is agreeable to Him (Psalm ix. 38).

To travel well, we should apply ourselves to the present day's journey, and not concern ourselves about the final one before we have finished the first. Remember this: we sometimes amuse ourselves so much about being good angels, that we hardly labour to become good men.

Our imperfection will accompany us to the grave. We cannot walk without touching the ground. It is not necessary to lie or wallow there; neither is it necessary to think of flying; for we are so small,

that we have not yet got wings. We die little by little; so we must also die to our imperfections day by day. O precious imperfections! which show us our misery, exercise us in humility and self-contempt, in patience and diligence, and in spite of which, God has regard to the preparation of our heart, that it may be perfect!

You complain of the many imperfections and defects to be found in your life, contrary to your desire of perfection, and to the purity of the love of God. I answer that anything else is impossible here below. We must carry ourselves about with us until God carries us to heaven; and so long as we carry ourselves, we shall have nothing to boast of.

O God! how great a blessing it is to know our weakness and our misery! This knowledge will serve us for the remainder of our days. "What does he know," says the Holy Scripture, "who has not been tempted?" My God! how much I desire to be humbled and confounded!*

Live joyful: Our Lord looks upon you, and looks upon you with love, and with tenderness in proportion to your weakness. Never permit your mind to willingly entertain thoughts to the contrary, and when they come, regard them not; turn your eyes away from their iniquity, and turn them towards God with a courageous humility, to speak to Him of His ineffable goodness, by which He loves our poor, abject, fallen nature, notwithstanding all its misery.

Our imperfections need not please us; we must

* Distrust over-anxious desires for good: they are full of self-love and of impatience *to be something*.

say with the great Apostle; *miserable man that I am! who will deliver me from this body of death?* But they need not astonish us, or take away our courage; we should rather draw submission, humility, and diffidence in ourselves from them, but not discouragement, nor affliction of heart, much less doubtfulness of the love of God towards us. Thus God does not love our imperfections nor venial sins, but He loves us much notwithstanding them. As the weakness and infirmity of an infant displease its mother, yet she does not cease to love it, but loves it tenderly and compassionately, so God, while He does not approve of our imperfections or venial sins, ceases not to love us tenderly; wherefore, David could say with reason to our Lord; *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.*

We must have patience, and not expect to cure in one day the many bad habits that we have contracted, through the little care we have taken of our spiritual health. God has indeed cured some persons speedily, in an instant, without a vestige of their malady remaining, as in the case of Magdalen, who, in a moment, was changed from a sink of corruption into a fountain of perfection, and was never afterwards troubled.

But this same God left, for a considerable time after their conversion, in many of His dear disciples, marks of their former evil inclinations: and all for their greater good: witness the blessed St. Peter, who, after his vocation, was often surprised by imperfections, and once fell miserably.*

* In order to obtain the remission of light faults, it is better, after having acknowledged them, to turn humbly and

Solomon makes mention of an animal as insolent as the servant who suddenly becomes mistress. There is great reason to fear that the soul which, for a long time, has served its passions and affections, would become proud and vain, if in a moment it were made perfect mistress of them. We must only acquire this ascendancy little by little, and step by step; it has engaged the saints for years and scores of years.

We must, if we please, have patience with every one, and particularly with ourselves. Have a little patience, and you will see that all will go well; for the dear Saviour of our souls has not given us those inflamed desires of serving Him, without intending to provide some opportunity for doing so. He postpones the hour of the accomplishment of your holy desires only to make you find it happier; for the loving heart of Our Redeemer arranges and adjusts the events of this world to the greater good of those who unreservedly devote themselves to His love. It will come then, the happy hour you desire, the day which Providence has named in the secrets of its mercy; and then, with a thousand consolations, you will unfold your interior before the divine goodness, the rocks will be changed into water, the serpent into a rod, and all the thorns of your heart into roses, sweet-scented roses, to recreate your mind with their delicious perfume. It is true that our faults, which,

lovingly towards God, than to preserve a sad remembrance of them and to remain a long time in fear. Whether your prevarications be serious or trivial, remain in pious sentiments of confidence towards the Lord, casting your sins into the abyss of His mercy, that they may be for ever lost there; for *there is no damnation to those who are in Jesus.*

while in the heart, are thorns, on coming forth by a voluntary accusation, are converted into roses; and as our malice raises them in the soul, so the goodness of the Holy Spirit drives them out.

There is nothing without trouble in this world; we must, therefore, compose our will in such a manner, as not to seek for our convenience, or if we do seek for it, to accommodate ourselves to those inconveniences which are inseparably attached to every convenience. We have no wine without lees. We must then examine whether it is better to have thorns in our garden, while we have roses there, than to have no roses, so as to have no thorns.

I pray our sweet Saviour to pour His holy unction over you, that you may repose tranquilly and securely on Him. O God! I recommend to Thee this poor heart of ours; comfort and strengthen it, that it may the better serve Thee; for such is the motive of our request. The heart is the lamb of holocaust which we must offer to God; it should always be in the best condition possible. It is the bed of the spouse; we should sprinkle it with flowers. Console then this poor heart, and give it an increase of joy and peace, that it may the better serve its Lord. Alas! what else have we to desire than this? Glory be to God! God or nothing; for all that is not God is nothing, or worse than nothing.

Let us always keep walking; though we advance slowly, yet we shall make much way. Your weakness, you say, impedes your progress, for it hinders you from entering into yourself, or approaching to God. This is certainly speaking ill. God leaves you thus for His glory and for your greater advantage. He wishes your misery to become the throne

of His mercy, and your impotence to be the seat of His omnipotence. Where did God place the divine strength of Samson, unless in his hair, the very weakest part of him? Let no one blame her who would wish to serve God according to His holy pleasure, and not according to sensible consolations.

Beware of falling into any kind of distrust; for the celestial goodness does not permit you to meet with those falls in order to abandon you, but to humble you, and to make you hold more firmly by the hand of God's mercy.

You please me exceedingly by continuing your exercises in the midst of the aridities and interior languors which have seized on your soul. For since we wish to serve God only for love, and that the services we render to Him, in the midst of aridity, are more acceptable to Him than those performed in the flow of consolation, we should also, on our part, endeavour to be more attached to them, at least with our superior will; and though, according to self-love, tenderness may be sweeter, yet, according to the views of God, dryness may be more profitable, as dry meats are more useful to dropsical persons than moist ones, though they prefer the latter.

Never permit your mind to think too much on its miseries; leave them to God; He will do something with them. Hardly bestow a thought on the share self-love has in these considerations; its sallies are to be neglected; to disown them two or three times a day is sufficient. We must not push them out with strength of arm, but merely say one little "no."

Have great courage, and take a long breath. Our enemy is a great clamourer; you need not be disturbed, for he cannot hurt you; laugh at him, and

let him go; this treatment completely kills him. He has often bawled around the saints with a wonderful hubbub; but what came of it, unless that they are now at rest in the place, which he, miserable wretch, lost?

CHAPTER VII.

WE MUST LABOUR AT OUR PERFECTION WITHOUT UNEASINESS.

THERE are two very different chords, yet equally necessary to be tuned, before playing on the lute, namely, the treble and the bass. It would seem at first sight, that nothing could be more discordant than a high note and a low note, yet, by their harmony, the most agreeable music is produced, and, in the absence of either, the lute would be unattractive. In like manner, on our spiritual lute, there are two things naturally contrary, and of necessity to be tuned, before evoking any sweet sounds: these are, to have a great care of perfecting ourselves, and to have no care of our perfection, but to leave it entirely to God; I mean to say that we must have the care which God wishes us to have of perfecting ourselves, and, nevertheless, leave to Him the care of our perfection. God wishes us to have a peaceful and tranquil care, such as will make us perform what is judged proper by those who guide us, and that we go faithfully forward in the way marked out by the rules and directions given us; as for the rest, to repose on His paternal bosom, endeavouring, as far as possible, to keep our soul at peace; for the abode of

God is in Himself and in the peaceful heart. You know that on a serene night, when the lake is calm, its waters unrippled by a breath of wind, the sky is so well shadowed in it, with all the stars, that looking down, we see the beauty of the heavens there as well as if we raised our eyes on high. In like manner, when our soul is tranquil, unagitated by the winds of superfluous care, unevenness of disposition, or inconstancy of mind, it is well suited to bear an image of Our Lord. But when it is troubled and disquieted by divers gusts and squalls of passions, and that we allow ourselves to be blown about by them, and are not governed by reason, which makes us like to God, we are then incapable of representing in ourselves the beautiful and holy image of Our Crucified Lord, or the diversity of His excellent virtues, or of presenting our soul as a nuptial bed worthy of Him. We must, then, leave the care of ourselves to the mercy of Divine Providence, and, nevertheless, do plainly and simply what lies in our power to amend and perfect ourselves, always taking the greatest care not to trouble or disquiet our souls.

There is no weariness so weary as that which arises from the annoyance of many little but pressing and continual importunities. Our Lord sometimes permits us to fall short in those little encounters, that we may be humbled, and learn that if we have at any time surmounted great temptations, it was not by our own strength we did so, but by the assistance of His divine goodness.

Do not waste time in combating the temptations that happen to you, by contests and disputes with them; only cast some simple glances of love towards

Jesus Christ crucified, as if you would wish to kiss His sacred side or feet.

Cast many times a-day your whole heart, mind, and care on God, with the utmost confidence, saying to Him, in the words of David: *I am thine, O Lord; save me.*

Live entirely to God, and for the love He has borne to you, endure yourself with all your miseries.

I do not mean to say by this, that you should continually be tying up your mind in order to hold it in peace; for you must do every thing with the simplicity of a loving heart, keeping near Our Lord as a little child near its father, and when you happen to fall into some faults, whatever they may be, ask pardon meekly, saying to Him that you are certain He loves you well, and will forgive you, and this always simply and sweetly.

All the ancient religious were most admirable in the confidence which they possessed that God would always give them whatever they should require for the support of life; but I consider that we ought to repose on Divine Providence, not only for what concerns temporal things, but much more for what relates to our spiritual life and perfection. It is only the too great care we have of ourselves that makes us lose our tranquillity of mind, and leads us to odd and fantastic notions; for when we meet with some contradiction, and perceive a little of our immortification, or when we commit some fault, however trifling it may be, we immediately imagine that all is lost. Is it so great a wonder then to see you stumble occasionally? "But I am so miserable, so full of imperfections!" Are you well aware thereof?

Bless God for having given you this knowledge, and do not lament it so much; you are very lucky in knowing that you are only misery itself. After having blessed God for the knowledge He has given you, remove that useless tenderness which makes you mourn over your infirmities. We have some sympathies for our body that are very much opposed to perfection, and others for our soul that are incomparably more so. "I am unfaithful to Our Lord, and therefore I have no consolation in prayer." A great pity indeed! "But I am so often in aridity, that it makes me believe I am not well with God, who is so full of consolations!" Capitally said, as if God always gave consolations to His friends! Was there ever a pure creature so worthy of being loved by God, and in reality so loved by Him, as Our Lady or St. Joseph? and yet sorely they were tried!

In a word, be not vexed, because you have been vexed; nor troubled, because you have been troubled; nor disquieted, because you have been disquieted by those annoying passions; but resume control over your heart, and place it lovingly in the hands of Our Lord, begging of Him to heal it: on your part, doing as much as you can for this purpose, by the renovation of your resolutions, perusal of good books, and other such means; and acting thus, you will gain considerably by your loss, and become much healthier by your sickness.

At the birth of Jesus, while the shepherds enjoyed celestial music and a glorious heavenly vision, Mary and Joseph in the stable beheld only the tears of the Divine Infant through the obscurity of the night. Yet who would prefer the condition of the former to that of the latter? Or who would not prefer to be with

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, though in the darkness of obscurity, than to be enraptured with the shepherds, though their joys were angelic ?

CHAPTER VIII.

INDIFFERENCE ABOUT OUR ADVANCEMENT IN VIRTUE.

GOD has ordered us to do everything we can for the acquirement of holy virtues; let us, then, neglect nothing to succeed in this holy enterprise. But after we have "planted and watered," let us know that it is God who "gives increase" to the plants of our good habits and inclinations. We must, therefore, expect the fruit of our desires and labours from Divine Providence. And if we do not perceive the progress and advancement of our souls in a devout life to be such as we could wish, let us not be troubled, let us remain in peace, let tranquillity ever dwell in our hearts. It is for us to carefully cultivate our souls, and so far we must be faithfully attentive. But as for the abundance of the harvest, let us leave the care of that to Our Lord. The labourer cannot be blamed if a splendid crop is wanting, but deservedly, if he has neglected to till the ground and sow the seed. Let us not be disturbed to find ourselves always novices in the practice of virtue; for, in the convent of a devout life, every one considers himself always a novice, and the whole life there is destined to probation, no evidence being more convincing that one is not only a novice, but even deserving of expulsion and reprobation, than to imagine himself professed; for according to the rules

of this order, it is not by the solemnity, but by the accomplishment of vows, that novices are professed. Now vows are never accomplished, so long as anything remains to be done for their observance, and the obligation of serving God and of making progress in His love endures until death. "But," some one will say to me, "suppose I know that it is by my own fault my advancement in virtue is retarded, how can I prevent myself from being saddened and disquieted?" It is necessary to be sorry for faults committed, with a repentance, strong, calm, peaceful, and constant, not turbulent, not disheartened. Are you certain that your delay on the highway of virtue is the result of your own fault? If so, humble yourself before God, implore His mercy, entreat His forgiveness, confess your fault, and cry to Him for mercy, even in the ear of your confessor to obtain absolution for it. But having done this, remain in peace, and having detested the offence, embrace lovingly the disquiet that is left to you for the delay of your advancement in good. Behold this beautiful soul, I beg of you: it greatly desired and strove to get free from anger, in which God favoured it, for He discharged it from all the sins that had previously proceeded from anger; it would now wish to die rather than say a single injurious word, or allow one sign of hatred to escape it. Nevertheless, it is still subject to the assaults and first movements of this passion, which are certain starts, shocks, and sallies of an irritated heart, that the Chaldaic paraphrase terms tremblings or flutterings, saying: "Tremble, and sin not," where our sacred version has it: "be angry, and sin not;" which is in fact the same thing; for the prophet only means to say, that if anger surpris-

ses us, exciting in our hearts those first flutterings, we must take care not to allow ourselves to be carried further, or we shall commit "sin." But though these tremblings are no sin, yet the poor afflicted soul is often troubled and disquieted by them, and thinks it does well to be sad, as if it were the love of God that could produce this sadness. Heavenly love does not produce this sadness, for it is offended only with sin; it is our self-love, which would have us exempt from the pain and labour attached to those assaults. It is not the fault that displeases us in those bursts of anger, for there is no sin therein; it is the pain of resisting them that annoys us.

The rebellions of the sensual appetite, in regard to anger as well as to concupiscence, are left in us for our exercise, that we may display spiritual valour in overcoming them. This appetite is the Philistine whom the true Israelite must ever combat, without ever conquering; we may weaken him, but cannot destroy him. He dies only with us, and lives as long as we live. He is, indeed, an execrable and detestable enemy, being the fruit of sin, and tending only to sin. On which account, as we are called "dust," because taken from the earth and returning to the earth, so this rebellion is called "sin" by the great Apostle, because it comes from sin and leads to sin, though it does not render us guilty of sin, unless we obey it. Whence the same Apostle warns us to act in such a manner that this evil "may not reign in our mortal body, to obey its concupiscence." It is not to feel sin, but to consent to sin, he forbids; he does not order us to prevent sin from entering into us, and being there, but he commands that it shall not "reign" there. It is in us when we per-

ceive the rebellion of the sensual soul; but it does not reign in us, unless we consent to its dominion.

“The sting of the flesh,” “the angel of Satan,” roughly tried the great St. Paul, to precipitate him into sin. The poor Apostle suffered it as a shameful and infamous injury: wherefore, he called it a “buffeting,” and besought God to be pleased to deliver him from it; but God answered him: “O Paul! my grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect in infirmity.” To which this great saint, acquiescing, said: “then willingly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Jesus Christ may dwell in me.” But, if you please, remark that the sensual rebellion is found even in this admirable vessel of election, who, by having recourse to the remedy of prayer, teaches us the means of overcoming the temptations we experience; remark also, that if Our Lord permits those cruel revolts in man, it is not always to punish him for some sin, but it is to manifest the power and energy of the divine grace and assistance; remark, in fine, that we should not only be untroubled about our temptations and infirmities, but should even glory in them, that the divine strength may appear in us, supporting our frailty against the attacks and suggestions of temptation. For the glorious Apostle calls the stings and darts of impurity which he felt, his infirmities, and says that he gloried in them, because if by his misery he endured them, yet, by the mercy of God, he did not consent to them.

God wishes that we should have enemies; God wishes that we should repel them. Let us, then, live courageously in the accomplishment of the divine

will, suffering with patience to be assaulted, and with bravery resisting the assaults.

CHAPTER IX.

WE SHOULD DRAW PROFIT FROM OUR FAULTS.

THE faults and infidelities of which we are guilty every day should indeed bring us shame and confusion, when we approach Our Lord; and thus we read of great saints, like St. Catherine of Sienna, and St. Teresa, that, when they had fallen into any fault, they experienced much confusion. Hence it is very reasonable, that, having offended God, we should retire from Him for a little by humility, and remain confused; for if we had offended only a friend, we should be ashamed to go near him.

But we must not remain away always; for the virtues of humility, abjection, and confusion are medium virtues, through which we must ascend to the union of our soul with God. It would be no great matter to annihilate and confound one's self, which is done by an act of humiliation, if it were not to give one's self to God, as St. Paul teaches us when he says: "divest yourselves of the old man, and put on the new." For we are not to remain naked, but to clothe ourselves with God. This little retirement is made only the better to rush into God by an act of love and confidence. We must not confound sadness with inquietude: it is self-love that raises a good deal of this confusion, because we are offended at not being perfect, less through love for

God than love for ourselves; and though you do not feel confidence, you should not cease to make acts thereof, saying to Our Lord: My Lord! though I have no sentiment of confidence in Thee, yet I know that Thou art my God, I am all Thine, and I have no hope but in Thy goodness; hence I abandon myself entirely into Thy hands.

It is always in our power to make these acts, and though we may have some difficulty, yet there is no impossibility in the way, and it is on such occasions that we show our fidelity to Our Lord; for though we make them without relish or satisfaction, still we have no need to be in pain on that account, since Our Lord prefers them so: and do not say that you utter them only from the mouth; for if the heart did not wish it, the mouth would not say a word. Having acted thus, remain in peace, and without attending to your trouble, speak to Our Lord of something else. To conclude this point, it is good to have confusion, when we have a knowledge and feeling of our misery and imperfection; but we must not rest there, or fall therefrom into discouragement, but lift our heart to God by a holy confidence, the foundation of which should be in Him, and not in ourselves, inasmuch as we change, but He never changes: always remaining the same, and as good and merciful when we are weak and imperfect, as when we are strong and perfect. I am accustomed to say that our misery is the throne of God's mercy; we must, therefore, as our misery is great, have so much the greater confidence.

To be a good servant of God is not to be always consoled, always in sweetness, always without aversion or repugnance for virtue; if it were, then neither

St. Paul, nor St. Angela, nor St. Catherine of Sienna, would have properly served God. To be a good servant of God is to be charitable towards our neighbour, to possess an inviolable resolution in the superior part of the soul to follow the will of God, to have such a profound humility and simplicity as will make us confide entirely in God and rise again when we fall, to endure patiently ourselves and our abjections, and to endure tranquilly our neighbours and their imperfections.

Certainly, when we take occasion from the sight of our imperfections to become humble, we gain considerably by our loss; inasmuch as the profit we make by advancing in the excellent virtue of humility is a rich reparation for the damage sustained by our frailty.

CHAPTER X.

ADVANTAGES WHICH WE OUGHT TO DRAW FROM OUR DEFECTS.

THE matter on which I am about to treat is one of the most important of a spiritual life. It is certain that, in the views of God, the faults into which He permits us to fall should serve for our sanctification, and that it depends on ourselves to draw this advantage from them.

What I have to say on this subject does not concern those cowardly and selfish souls, who make reservations with God, and who wish only to belong to Him to a certain degree. They commit, with foresight and reflection, a thousand faults, from which

it is impossible they should derive any advantage, considering their evil dispositions. The persons for whom I write are those only who are determined not to commit any fault deliberately, though many escape them through surprise, inadvertence, and weakness, notwithstanding their resolution.

It usually happens that such persons are astonished and troubled at their faults, conceive a false shame for them, and fall into vexation and discouragement. These are the effects of self-love, and are much more pernicious than the faults themselves. We are surprised at falling: an evident mark that we scarcely know ourselves. We ought, on the contrary, to be surprised at not falling more frequently, and into more grievous faults, and return thanks to God for the dangers from which He preserves us. We are troubled every time that we are beguiled into some fault, lose interior peace, are agitated, and spend hours, even days, thinking of it. We should never be troubled; but when we find ourselves on the ground, arise tranquilly, return to God with love, ask His forgiveness, and reflect no more on what has occurred, unless when it is necessary to accuse ourselves of it. We have a false shame for our faults; we can hardly venture to discover them to our confessor. "What idea will he have of me after so many promises, so many assurances, I have given him?" If you declare your faults simply and humbly, he will have more esteem for you. If you have a difficulty in telling them to him, his confidence in you will diminish on account of your want of sincerity. But the worst of all is that we are vexed at being vexed, and impatient at being impatient. What a misery! Should we not see that this is

pride, that we are humbled on finding ourselves less holy than we had imagined, that we aspire to be exempt from imperfections and faults only in order to applaud and congratulate ourselves on having spent one day or week without much matter of reproach? In fine, we are discouraged; we abandon our exercises one by one; we give up prayer; we regard perfection as impossible, and despair of arriving at any such height. What will this constraint, we say, this continual watching over one's self, this struggle after recollection and mortification, avail us, since we correct nothing, fall incessantly, and never become better? There is not a craftier snare of the demon than this. Would you wish to be protected from it? Never be discouraged, and no matter what fault you happen to commit, say: though I should fall twenty times, or a hundred times, a-day, I will arise at every fall, and pursue my course. What does it amount to, after all, that you should have met with some accidents on the way, provided you safely reach the journey's end? God will not reproach you after your recovery. Very often those mishaps proceed from the rapidity of our speed, and from that ardour which prevents us from taking the necessary precautions. Timid and cautious souls, who always wish to see where they put their foot, who turn aside every moment for fear of making a false step, who cannot bear to have their shoes soiled, never advance so quickly as others, who are less punctilious, but more daring, and whom death often overtakes in the midst of their course. It is not those who commit the least number of faults, that are the most holy, but those who have the greatest courage, the greatest generosity, the greatest love, who make the

boldest efforts to overcome themselves, and are not immoderately apprehensive of tripping, or even of falling and being dirtied a little, provided they advance.

St. Paul has told us that every thing turns to good for those who love God. 'Every thing turns to their welfare, even their faults, and sometimes the most grievous faults. God permits those faults in order to heal a vain presumption, and to teach us what we are, and of what we are capable. David acknowledged that the adultery and homicide into which he had fallen served to keep him in continual distrust of himself. *It is a blessing for me*, he says to God, *that thou hast humbled me; I have been more faithful since to thy commandments.* The fall of St. Peter was a most useful lesson to him, and the humility with which it inspired him disposed him to receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and to become head of the Church, and preserved him amid the dangers of so eminent a position. St. Paul, during the period of his greatest success in the apostleship, preserved himself against pride and vanity, by remembering that he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor of the Church of God. A humiliating temptation, from which God would not deliver him, served as a counterpoise to the sublimity of his revelations.

If God knows how to draw advantage even from the greatest sins, who can suppose that He will fail to turn our daily faults to our sanctification? It is a remark made by the masters of a spiritual life, that very often God leaves in the holiest souls some defects, which, notwithstanding all their endeavours, they cannot eradicate. He acts thus in order to make them feel their weakness; to show them what they would be without grace, to guard them from

the inflation of vanity on account of His favours, to dispose them to receive other benefits with greater humility, to keep a holy self-hatred alive in their breasts, to withdraw them from the snares of self-love, to preserve their fervour and confidence towards Him, and to teach them the necessity of having continual recourse to prayer. The child that tumbles when it wanders a little distance from its mother, returns to her with greater tenderness, and from experience learns not to quit her in a hurry again. The lesson it has received on its own weakness and its mother's goodness, inspires it with a livelier affection for her.

The faults into which we fall often give place to great acts of virtue, which, otherwise, we should never have had occasion to practise, and God permits our faults for this end. For example, a dash of temper, a brusque reply, a manifest impatience, just fits one for a good act of humility, which abundantly repairs the fault and the scandal it had given. The fault is committed by a sudden impulse; the reparation is made with reflection, by a victory over one's self, and with a full and deliberate will. The latter is an act much more agreeable to God, than the former as a fault was disagreeable to Him.

God makes use of our faults and apparent imperfections to conceal our sanctity from the eyes of others, and to procure us humiliations from them.

God is a great master; let us allow Him to act. He will not fail at His work. Let us propose to ourselves to avoid carefully the least thing in the world that could displease Him. But when we shall have fallen into some faults, let us be sorry on His account, not on our own, let us cherish the abjection

arising from our mishaps, and constantly beg of God to draw from them His own glory and our humiliation. He will do so, and advance us a great deal further by this means than by a life more regular and holy in appearance, but not so efficacious for the destruction of self-love.

When God requires certain things from us, let us not retire under pretext of the faults we should commit in performing them. It is much better to do good with imperfection, than to omit it. Sometimes we do not give a correction that is necessary, through fear of being carried away by impatience. We avoid the conversation of certain persons whose faults offend and annoy us. But how shall we acquire virtues, if we fly their occasions? Is not this a greater fault than that into which we fear to fall? Let us have a good intention, attend where duty calls, and be satisfied that God is sufficiently indulgent to pardon us the faults into which His service and our desire of pleasing Him expose us.

CHAPTER XI.

TRIALS IN PRAYER.

PRAYER illumines our understanding with a divine light, and lays open our will to the holy flames of celestial love. Nothing so much purifies our mind from its errors, or our will from its depraved affections. It is a water of benediction, which makes the plants of our good desires grow green again and flourish, satiates the thirst of our hearts, and allays the heat of irregular concupiscence.

That uneasiness you experience at prayer, and which is joined with a great anxiety to discover some object capable of arresting and contenting your mind, is alone sufficient to prevent you from finding what you seek. When we search for any thing with too much eagerness, we pass it by a hundred times without perceiving it.

The result of this vain and useless anxiety is weariness of mind; hence, coldness and torpor of soul. I know not what remedies you should use, but if you can possibly prevent this solicitude, you will do a good work; devotion cannot meet a more pestiferous enemy. It takes the semblance of endeavouring to excite us towards virtue, but only in order to cool us, and makes us run, but to overthrow us. We must, then, guard against excessive ardour on all occasions, but particularly in prayer.

To assist you in this, you should remember that the graces and favours of prayer are not earthly, but heavenly waters, which all our efforts cannot acquire, but for which indeed we must dispose ourselves with humble and tranquil care.

We must hold up our heart open to heaven, and await the sacred dew. And never forget to carry this consideration to prayer, that therein we approach to God, and do so for two principal reasons.

The first is, to render to God the honour and homage which we owe Him, and this can be done without His speaking to us, or our speaking to Him; acknowledging by our presence that He is our God, and we His vile creatures, and remaining prostrate in spirit before Him, awaiting His commands.

How many courtiers are there who appear a hundred times before the king, not to speak to him, or

hear him, but simply to be seen by him, and to testify by their assiduity that they are his servants! This motive of presenting ourselves before God merely to attest our engagement in His service is most pure, worthy, and excellent, and, consequently, of the highest perfection.

The second reason for which we come before God is to speak to Him, and to hear Him speak to us by His inspirations and interior motions, and this is usually performed with a delicious pleasure, because it is a great happiness to speak to so mighty a Lord, and when He answers, He is accustomed to pour out such precious balm and unction as fill the soul to overflowing with sweetness.

One of these reasons may sometimes fail us, but both never. If we can speak to Our Lord, let us speak to Him, praise Him, beseech Him, listen to Him; if we cannot, because we are hoarse, let us remain in his chamber, and pay Him reverence; He will observe us there, regard our patience, and be pleased with our silence. Another time we shall be amazed when He takes us by the hand, and shows us every thing, making a hundred turns along the beautiful walks of the garden of prayer; but even if He should never do so, we ought to be content with fulfilling our duty of accompanying His suite, and consider that it is already too great an honour for Him to endure us in His presence.*

* "A soul should not resolve, on account of the drynesses it experiences, to abandon prayer, even though its trials continue always; it should regard them as a very profitable cross to carry in the footsteps of its Saviour, who invisibly assists it. We cannot lose anything in the company of so good a Master, and the time will come when He will repay, with

Put aside those heart-rending inquietudes, and no longer say—that you can do nothing in prayer. What would you wish to do there, but what you really do, which is, to represent and offer to God your misery and nothingness? The most beautiful address that beggars make, is to expose to our eyes their sores and their rags.

But sometimes, you will tell me, you cannot even do so much as this, for you remain there as a shadow or a statue. Very well; that is just as good. In the palaces of kings there are statues arranged, which serve only to recreate the royal vision. Be content, then, as one of these in the presence of God. He will animate this statue when He pleases.

You ask me how you should act in order to carry your soul straight to God, without looking to the right hand or to the left.

The question is so much the more agreeable to me, as it carries its answer along with it. You must do what you say, go straight to God, without looking to the right hand or to the left.

This is not what you ask, I see, but how you should act in order so to establish your soul on God, that nothing may be able to detach it from Him.

Two things are necessary for that, namely, to die and to be saved; no more separation then; but your

interest, our fidelity. Our Lord permits these and such like pains to happen to some persons in the beginning, and to others during the course of their exercises in prayer. The graces with which He intends to honour us at last being so great, He wishes first of all to make us understand how vast is our misery, that we may be preserved from pride.”—*St. Teresa.*

soul will be indissolubly attached and united to its God.

You say that this is not yet what you ask, but how you should act in order to prevent the least trifle from withdrawing your soul from God, as only too often happens.

You mean to say, I suppose, the least distraction; well, you ought to know that the least trifle of a distraction cannot withdraw your soul from God, since nothing withdraws us from God but sin, and the resolution we make in the morning to keep our soul united to God, and attentive to His presence, has the effect of preserving us thus always, even when we sleep, since we do all in the name of God, and according to His most holy will.

Even venial sins are not capable of turning us aside from the way which conducts to God; they undoubtedly retard us a little on our course, but they do not turn us aside: much less simple distractions.

So far as prayer is concerned, it is not less useful, or less agreeable to God, when accompanied with many distractions; on the contrary, it may be more useful than if we had many consolations, because it is more laborious: provided, however, that we have the wish to withdraw from those distractions, and do not allow our mind to dwell on them willingly.

The very same observation applies to the difficulty which, during the day, we feel to fix our mind on God and on heavenly things; provided we endeavour to keep our thoughts from running after trifles, and learn patience, by not growing weary of our labour, which is suffered for the love of God.

We must distinguish between God and a percep-

tion of God, between faith and a feeling of faith. A person about to suffer martyrdom for God does not always think of God at that time, and though he has no feeling of faith, yet he does not cease to merit, or to perform an act of the greatest love. It is the same with the presence of God. We must content ourselves with considering that He is our God, and we are His weak creatures, unworthy of that honour; thus St. Francis spent a whole night, saying to God: "Who art Thou, O Lord! and who am I?"

He who, in praying to God, perceives that he prays, is not perfectly attentive to prayer; for he turns away his attention from God to think on the prayer which he offers. Even the care that we have not to have distractions, is often a very great distraction: simplicity in spiritual actions is their most commendable quality. Would you wish to behold God? Behold Him then, and be attentive to that; for if you begin to reflect and to examine how you look yourself while you are looking on Him, it is no longer God you are viewing, but yourself. He who is occupied in fervent prayer pays no attention as to whether he is engaged in prayer or not, for he thinks not of the prayer which he makes, but of God to whom he makes it. He who burns with the ardour of sacred love does not recall his heart to consider what it does, but keeps it fixed on God, employed in loving Him, with whose love it is consumed. The heavenly chorister takes so much pleasure in pleasing his God, that he finds no pleasure in the melody of his voice, unless because it pleases his God.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSOLATION IN TEMPTATION.

BE not troubled, however great the temptations that assail you. Let the enemy rage at the door; let him stamp, thump, romp, yell, do the worst in his power; we are sure he cannot enter but by the door of our consent. Let us keep it closed, often taking a look to see that it is properly fastened, and there is nothing to fear.

Humble yourself very much, and be not at all surprised. The lilies that grow among thorns are the whitest. *What does he know, who has not been tempted?*

It is a misfortune that you dread temptations so much. Be assured that all the temptations of hell cannot sully a soul which is displeased with them; let them do their worst then. The Apostle St. Paul suffered terrible ones, and God, out of love for him, would not remove them. Come, come, have courage; let this heart belong to Jesus, and let the mastiff bark at the door as long as he pleases. Join the sweet Jesus and His sweet Mother in the midst of darkness, nails, thorns, lances, derelictions.* Live

* "What I have said suffices to show with how much contempt every true Christian should regard those phantoms by which the devils endeavour to terrify him. Let him know that as often as a soul despises its adversaries, it weakens them, and acquires sway over them; each new attack brings it some new advantage. I clearly see their impotence; faithful to God, no one need be afraid. They are strong only against

for a time in tears, without obtaining anything; God will at length rejoice you, and grant you the desire of your heart. But even if He should not, let us not cease to serve Him, for He does not cease to be our God, and the affection that we owe to Him should be immortal and imperishable.

I observe very distinctly the ant-hill of inclinations that self-love nourishes and spreads over your heart, and I know quite well that the nature of your subtile, delicate, and fertile mind, contributes something thereto; but still, they are only inclinations, and since you are annoyed by their importunity, there is no reason to suppose that they are accepted by any consent, or at least by any deliberate consent.

No, your dear soul having conceived the great desire with which God has inspired it to belong to Him, could not easily consent to any contrary design. Your heart may be shaken by its passions, but I think it can rarely sin by consent. *Miserable man that I am*, said the great Apostle, *who will deliver me from this body of death?*

He perceives a regular army, composed of his humours and aversions, natural habits and earthly inclinations, that have determined on his spiritual death; and because he fears them, he testifies that he hates them; and because he hates them, he cannot endure them without grief; and his grief finds expression in this affecting exclamation, to which he replies himself by saying that *the grace of God through Jesus Christ should preserve him*, not from fear, or from

those careless souls who capitulate without a battle, and who receive on surrender that treatment which is administered by despots."—*St. Teresa.*

terror, or from alarm, or from battle, but from defeat.

“It is true,” you say; “but I have already often taken the knife to cut off and circumcise my passions; I have done all, as appears to me, that I possibly could, employing much time, with very great care and vigilance, yet I still experience the same aversions, disgusts, and repugnances.” Ah! my dear soul, do you not know that we are not in this world for enjoyment, but for suffering? Wait awhile until you are in heaven, and then you will possess a full peace and a perfect contentment—exempt from all the irregular motions of a nature vitiated and corrupted by sin—a tranquillity and repose unalterable, because it is there we are to enjoy peace, and not in this life, where we must suffer, and must circumcise ourselves. He who would live here without passions would not suffer, but enjoy himself, which cannot be; for as long as we live, we shall have passions, and shall never be free from them before death, according to the opinion of doctors, received by the Church. But why be in trouble, since in combating those passions and motions lies our victory, our triumph, our glory?*

To be in this world, and not to feel any emotion of passion, is an inconsistency. The glorious St.

* “*Blessed,*” says St. James, “*is he who suffers temptation; for when he shall have borne this trial he shall receive the crown of life, and enjoy, not only in heaven, but while still living on earth, a perfect beatitude in the depth of his heart, united to our king, Jesus, by a pure and holy love. Hope not to enter into an intimate union with the God of sanctity, without first being sanctified by the cross. Be ye holy, says God, for I am holy.*”—*Olier.*

Bernard says that it is heresy to assert that we can persevere in one same state here below, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost, speaking by the mouth of Job, concerning man, declares that *he never remains in the same state*. This is an answer to your complaints regarding the levity and inconstancy of your soul; for I believe, without a doubt, that it is continually beaten about by the winds of its passions, and consequently, is always in commotion; but I believe as firmly that the grace of God and your good resolutions remain steady in the summit of your soul, where the standard of the cross is firmly planted, and where faith, hope, and charity exclaim aloud: *live Jesus!*

Take notice of this: so long as the temptation displeases you, there is nothing to fear; for why does it displease you, but because you do not approve of it? These importunate temptations come from the malice of the devil; but the pain we feel on their account comes from the mercy of God, who, in opposition to the will and from the wickedness of our enemy, draws a holy tribulation by which He refines the gold intended for His treasury.*

I say, then, that your temptations are from the devil and hell, but your afflictions are from God and heaven; the mothers are from Babylon, but the daughters are from Jerusalem. Despise the vain allurements; embrace the precious tribulation.

It is necessary for the soldier to be victorious in war, to be at his ease in peace. Never shall we possess perfect meekness and charity, unless we are

* "To unite one's self to God without directly combating a temptation is a very efficacious mode of not yielding to it. By this means we find in Jesus Christ what we cannot find in ourselves."—*Bossuet*

exercised in repugnances, aversions, and disgusts. True peace does not consist in never fighting, but is found after victory. The vanquished no longer combat, yet they do not enjoy true peace. We should be exceedingly humbled to see that we are yet so little masters of ourselves, and so much attached to our own ease and repose.

We shall obtain no recompense without victory, no victory without war. Have courage, then, and by converting your pain, which is without remedy, into merit, make a virtue of necessity. Look often to Our Lord, who regards you, poor little creature as you are, amid your labours and distractions. He will send you aid, and will bless your afflictions. You should, on this consideration, take patiently and quietly the tediousness that grieves you, and bear it meekly for the love of Him who only permits it for your good.

Elevate, then, your heart frequently to God, beg His assistance, and let your chief consolation be the happiness of belonging to Him. Every object of displeasure will be of little account when you remember that you have so kind a friend, so great a support, so excellent a refuge.

CHAPTER XIII.

DIFFIDENCE AND CONFIDENCE.

DIFFIDENCE in our own strength does not mean a want of resolution, but is a true acknowledgment of our misery. It is far better to diffide in our power of resisting temptations, than to imagine ourselves

sufficiently strong and secure, provided that what we cannot expect from our own strength, we do expect from the grace of God.

Many who, in the midst of great consolation, promised to do wonders for God, have, on coming to the point, failed completely; and many who were possessed of a great distrust of their own strength, and a great fear that they should fail on a trying occasion, have, at the moment, done wonders: because this sense of their weakness impelled them to seek help from God, to watch, to pray, and to be humble, so as not to enter into temptation.

I say that though we should not feel within us any strength or courage to resist temptation, were it immediately presented to us, yet, provided we desire to resist it, and hope that, if it came, God would assist us, and we should ask His aid, there is no reason for us to be sad, inasmuch as it is not necessary always to feel strength and courage, but it is sufficient that we hope to have them at the proper time and place; and there is no need that we should perceive in ourselves any sign or mark that we shall have them, but it suffices that we hope to receive succour from God.

Sampson, the strongest of men, did not perceive the supernatural strength with which God had invested him, unless on rare occasions; and hence it is said that when he met with lions or enemies, the Spirit of God seized upon him to destroy them. Thus God, who does nothing in vain, gives us strength and courage only when we require them; and, therefore, we must always hope that in every occurrence, He will aid us, if we invoke Him. We should often employ these words of David: *Why art*

thou sorrowful, O my soul? and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in the Lord; and that prayer he used: *when my strength forsakes me, O Lord! thou wilt not abandon me.* Very well, now, since you desire to belong entirely to God, why do you fear your weakness, though I do not mean you to place any reliance on it? Do you hope in God? And shall he who hopes in God ever be confounded? No, never. I conjure you, then, to silence those vain sophisms that arise in your mind; no other answer is necessary than that you desire to be faithful on all occasions, and hope, without testing your soul as to its future dispositions, that in every time God will enable you to serve Him faithfully. Many who are brave in the absence of an enemy, show little valour in his presence; and, on the other hand, many who tremble before the battle, are the boldest in the hour of danger: we should not be afraid of fear.

Walk always near to God, for the gentleness of His shadow is more salutary than the brightness of the sun.

It is not wrong to tremble sometimes before Him in whose presence the angels themselves tremble, when they behold His majesty: but on condition that holy love, which predominates over all His works, should hold the highest place in our souls, as it should be the beginning and the end of all our considerations.

CHAPTER XIV.

REMEDY FOR TEMPTATIONS AGAINST PURITY.

REMAIN in peace in the midst of temptations; faith, hope, and charity, well fixed in our hearts, are not likely to be shaken, though exposed to the breeze: how can we expect our resolutions to be undisturbed? You are certainly deserving of admiration if you cannot be content with having your trees deeply and firmly planted, but also desire that not a leaf should be stirred.

No, no, let the wind blow; and mistake not the rustling of the leaves for the crash of arms. I was lately near a bee-hive, and some of the bees flew out on my face. I put up my hand to drive them away. "Stop," said a countryman, "there is no fear, do not touch them, and they will not hurt you; if you touch them, they will sting you." I believed his word, and not one of them injured me.

Now, if you believe my word, do not fear those temptations, or touch them, and they will not do you the least harm. Pass by, and give yourself no concern.

We may use a variety of plans on such occasions. Sometimes it is well to make a few acts of the love of God, and of confidence in His grace; then not to fear being carried away by those little attacks against our resolutions. They are groundless annoyances; for, if the angel of darkness, buffeting St. Paul by so many agitations, could not make him offend against purity, why should we imagine that our resolutions are broken on similar occasions?

Answer not a word to the shameful thoughts that come upon you; only say to Our Lord from your heart: O my God! Thou knowest that I honour Thee; I am all Thine. *Dispute not with the temptation.*

Here, alas! is a good soul greatly tempted. Let it be exceedingly humbled, but not astonished: the lilies that grow among thorns are the whitest. *What does he know, who has not been tempted?* It may change the bodily exercise, if the pain lie in the thoughts; if it cannot conveniently change the occupation, let it change the posture; by this diversity, it will find relief. If the pain fill the imagination, it is good to sing, to join the company of others, or to pass from one spiritual exercise to another. Above all, let the soul not be astonished, but frequently renew its vows, and be humbled before God. Let it promise itself victory through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

If anything remain as a scruple, let it mention the matter boldly and courageously, on going to confession. But I trust in God that with a noble mind it will keep free from every thing that could be a cause of scruple. I would wish it to use the hair-shirt once a week, unless it finds that, by doing so, it becomes more sluggish in the performance of more important exercises, as sometimes happens.

CHAPTER XV.

MODE OF COMBATING TEMPTATIONS AGAINST FAITH.

YOUR temptations against faith have returned, and though you do not reply to them by a single syllable, yet they press hard upon you.

You do not reply to them; so far, good; but you think upon them, you are alarmed at them, you tremble for them; only for this, they would not do you any hurt. You are too sensitive about temptations. You love your faith, and would not wish to have one thought contrary to it; hence, immediately when a thought touches your mind, you are saddened and troubled. You are too jealous of the purity of faith; every thing appears to you capable of tainting it.

We must act in this temptation as in that against chastity: neither dispute with it much or little; but do as the children of Israel did with the bones of the Paschal lamb, which they would not attempt to break, but cast whole into the fire. We must not answer or appear to understand what the enemy says. Let him brawl as long as he pleases at the door; we need only say: who's there?

That is true, you will tell me; but he annoys me, and the noise he makes outside is so great, that I cannot understand or arrange any thing well within. Patience! we shall speak by signs, we shall prostrate ourselves before the Lord, and remain at His feet; He will understand by this humble behaviour that you are His, and that you desire His assistance, while unable to ask it. But especially take care not to open the door within, either to see who is without, or to chase the vagabond; at length he will cease his noise, and leave you in peace.

It will soon be time, you tell me. Courage! then; it will soon be time; provided that he does not enter, all is right. It is a very good sign if our enemy knocks and storms at the door, for it shows that he is not where he would wish to be. If it

were open, he would no longer cry out, he would enter, and take a seat. Remember this, so as not to fall into scrupulosity.

I desire that we should be simple and settled in that faith which the holy Church teaches us, believing firmly every thing that is written on this rock: for the evangelical law is written on it. Let us believe firmly, and submit our understanding to that Church which our Lord built upon the rock; for the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. Our Lord prayed for St. Peter that his faith might not fail: this is the head of that Church which is the pillar and the ground of truth, as St. Paul says to his dear Timothy. "Blessed is he who dashes his little ones against the rock," says the Psalmist. When you are surprised sometimes with strange fancies concerning the things of faith, with little imaginations and thoughts of infidelity, what will you do? If you allow them to enter into your mind they will trouble you, and take away your peace; break and shatter those thoughts and imaginations to pieces against the rock of the Church, and say to your understanding: ah! my understanding, God has not commanded thee to feed thyself; it is for Peter and his successors to feed thee; blessed then is he who breaks his little ones against this rock.

I shall now give you another remedy. Temptations against faith go directly to the understanding to lead it to disputations, to reveries, to dreams. Do you know how you should act while the enemy amuses himself about the means of scaling your intellect? Start out presently by the door of your will, and give him a good shot; that is to say, as

soon as the temptation against faith makes its appearance, attack it. But how do this? and how do that? and what if this happens? and what if that happens? Instead of entering into any discourse or discussion with the enemy, let your effective force with all its strength rush upon him, and, at the same time, joining the exterior to the interior voice, cry out: ah! wretched traitor! you forsook the Church of the Angels, and would you wish me to forsake that of the Saints? disloyal, unfaithful, and perfidious, you presented the first woman with the apple of perdition, and would you wish me to taste it too? *Begone, Satan! for it is written: thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;* no, I will not argue or contend with you: Eve, wishing to do so, was seduced; Eve yielding, was lost; live Jesus, in whom I believe! live the Church, to which I adhere!

We must also say to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit such other things as they will suggest, and to the Church: O mother of the children of God! never shall I be separated from thee! I wish to live and die within thy pale!

I do not know whether I have made myself well understood. I mean to say that we should retaliate with affections and not with reasons, with virtues and not with considerations. It is true that during the time of temptation, the poor will is as dry as a stick; but so much the better; its blows will be the more terrible on the enemy, who, when he sees that instead of retarding your progress, he only gives you occasion to exercise a thousand virtuous affections, and particularly to make protestations of faith, will very soon leave you altogether.

To conclude: these temptations, like others, are

but afflictions; and we must rely upon the assurance of Holy Scripture: *blessed is he who endures temptation; for having been proved, he shall receive the crown of life.* I must inform you that I have seen few persons advanced in holiness without this trial, and therefore we must have patience. Our God will send the calm after the storm.

CHAPTER XVI.

TEMPTATIONS OF BLASPHEMY AND INFIDELITY.

You cannot and you should not believe that temptations of blasphemy and infidelity come from God; and who ever taught you that God was their author? It were all right, if you spoke of darkness; all right, of dereliction and deprivation of strength; all right, of diarrhoea in the spiritual stomach; all right, of bitterness in the interior mouth, which makes the sweetest wine of this world bitter; but of suggestions of blasphemy and infidelity, ah! no. They cannot come from our good God; His bosom is too pure for such conceptions.

Do you know how God acts in this case? He permits the wicked blacksmith who turns out such articles of workmanship to come and offer them to us for sale, in order that by our contempt for those miserable wares we may testify our affection for divine things. Thus He acted with Job, with St. Anthony, with St. Catherine of Sienna, with many good souls whom I have known, and with my own soul, which is worthless, and which I have not known.

Well, then, is there any need to be vexed? Let him cool himself, and do you keep every avenue barricaded; he will depart at length, or, if not, God will compel him to raise the siege. Remember what I think I told you before; it is a very good sign that he makes so much noise and disturbance outside the will, for it shows he is not inside. And courage! so long as we can say with resolution, though without consolation: live Jesus! there is nothing to fear.

Do not tell me that you seem to say it like a coward, without strength or courage, and only by doing violence to yourself. O God! this is that holy violence which bears away the kingdom of heaven.

Your apprehensions may show that the outworks have been taken, that the enemy has captured the entire fortress, but still the citadel remains impregnable, and can only fall with its defender.

This defender is our free will, which, naked before God, resides in the highest and most spiritual portion of the soul, without any other support than God and itself; when every other faculty of the soul is disturbed by the enemy, it alone remains perfect master of itself to yield or not to yield.

But, you see, souls are afflicted, because the enemy, holding possession of all the other faculties, raises in them a frightful tumult and uproar. Scarcely can we understand what is said, scarcely can the superior will make one movement. Its voice is clearer, softer, finer than that of the inferior will, but the harsh, rough tones of the latter drown the former.*

* The following beautiful thoughts are from the blessed Henry Suso; they are well calculated to comfort souls subject to those horrible temptations: "I shall add, to terminate this

CHAPTER XVII.

MANNER OF BEHAVING IN THE TEMPTATIONS OF
SELF-LOVE.

Love of ourselves, esteem of ourselves, false freedom of spirit, are roots which cannot be easily plucked out of the human heart; but we can prevent their bearing any fruits, which are sins; as for their starts or buddings we cannot prevent them altogether, so long as we are in this life, though we can moderate their dimensions by the practice of contrary virtues, especially by the love of God.

We must then have patience, and little by little

subject, that the temptations of blasphemy, despair, and interior shame, place to a certain degree those who resist them in the rank and prerogatives of martyrs; for the servants of God would much prefer to yield with one blow their heads, their blood, their life, for Jesus Christ, than to endure such painful temptations for months, and even for years. Let us conclude then that persons afflicted with scruples are the most favoured by divine love, and the surest to arrive at heaven, because by enduring their pains with patience and humility, and thus dying to themselves, they live in a continual purgatory, and leave this earth only to fly to heaven, purified from every matter of expiation. This is what happened to a holy soul that was cruelly tried by the temptations of which we have spoken. God glorified it at the moment of death, conducted it to heaven without requiring it to pass through the flames of purgatory, and of its salvation I can render testimony, to the praise and honour of Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever."

retrench our evil habits, overcome our inclinations, and subdue our aversions; for, in a word, my dearest daughter, this life is a continual warfare, and who is he that can say, I am not attacked?

Rest is reserved for heaven, where the palm of victory awaits us. On earth we must always struggle between fear and hope, with the condition that hope shall ever be the stronger, in consideration of the omnipotence of Him who helps us.

Self-love never dies but when we die; it has a thousand means of concealment in our soul, so that we cannot dislodge it. It is the eldest-born of the soul, it is natural to us. It heads a battalion of rifles, with dreadful mutinies, stratagems, passions. Nothing can be more adroit; it has a thousand quick evolutions.

We must always expect either its open attacks or its secret influences so long as we are in this land of exile; it suffices that we do not yield to it with a full, steady, deliberate consent. The virtue of holy indifference is so excellent that our old man, or human nature, according to its natural faculties, was not capable of it; not even in Our Lord, who, as a child of Adam, though exempt from sin and all its appurtenances, was not, according to His natural faculties, indifferent to events, but desired not to die on the cross: perfect indifference being reserved to the supreme portion of the soul, to the faculties glowing with grace, to the "new man."

Little surprises of passion are unavoidable in this mortal life, on which account the great Apostle cries to heaven: *alas! poor wretch that I am!* I feel two different men within me, the old and the new; two laws, the law of the senses, and the law of the spirit;

two operations, that of nature and that of grace.
Who will deliver me from this body of death?

This is the reason why we have not that consolation we ought to have when we see good done; for what we do not see in ourselves is not so sweet or agreeable to us as what we see there, because we love ourselves too tenderly and delicately.

Self-love makes us desire to do such and such a thing of our own choice, but we would not desire to do it if of another's choice, or from obedience.

On the other hand, if we possessed the perfection of the love of God, we would far prefer to do what is commanded, because it proceeds more from the love of God, and less from ourselves.

Your way is very good, and there is nothing to be said against it, unless that, considering the length of your steps, you go rather fast and run the risk of falling. You make too many reflections on those sallies of your self-love, which are indeed frequent, but not dangerous, so long as without being wearied at their importunity or astonished at their multiplicity, you quietly say one little "no." Walk in simplicity; desire not so much repose of mind, and you shall find more.

Why do you put yourself in pain? God is good, He knows well what you are; your inclinations cannot injure you, bad as they are, since they are left in you only to exercise your superior will in effecting a more advantageous union with the will of God. Keep your eyes raised on high, my dearest daughter, by a perfect confidence in the goodness of God. Be not too busy about Him, for He told Martha that He did not wish it. He would prefer us not to be so anxious, even to do good.

Do not examine your soul and its progress so closely. You should not wish to be so perfect, but with good faith pass your life in those exercises and employments which await you from time to time. Be not solicitous for the morrow. God, who has guided you until the present day, will guide you to the end. Rely peacefully, with a holy and loving confidence, on the sweet arrangements of Divine Providence.

It is folly to be astonished at finding self-love within us; for it never leaves us. It sleeps sometimes like a fox; then suddenly awakes; we must therefore with constancy watch it, and with patience defend ourselves. If it sometimes wounds us, we are healed by retracting what it has made us say, and disowning what it has made us do. The sallies of self-love should be neglected. By disowning them two or three times a-day, we are set free. It is not necessary to drive them out by the neck, it suffices to say one little "no."

Let us then remain in peace. When we happen to offend against the laws of indifference in things indifferent, carried away by some sudden fit of self-love or of the passions, let us as soon as possible lay our heart before God, let us say to Him in a spirit of confidence and humility: *mercy! Lord! for I am weak.* Let us then arise in peace and tranquillity, and renew the thread of our indifference, to continue our work.

There is no need to tear the chords or to throw away the lute because we have perceived a little discord; we must listen to find out whence the discord arises, and tighten or slacken the strings as the art requires

The inclinations of pride, of vanity, of self-love, are blended with our life, and whether sensibly or insensibly, introduce their sentiments into almost all our actions; but still they are not the motives of our actions. St. Bernard one day feeling that they attacked him while he preached, said:—"depart from me, Satan! it was not for you I began, and it is not for you I will finish."

One single thing I have to say to you regarding what you wrote to me, that you nourish pride by affectation in your discourse and in your correspondence. In language, indeed, affectation sometimes glides in so insensibly that we do not perceive it, but if we chance to take notice of it, we should immediately change the style. In letters it is much more insupportable, for we better see what we are doing, and if we find any notable affectation, we must punish the hand that wrote it, by obliging it to write another letter after some other fashion.

I doubt not but that amid so many turns and windings of the heart, a few venial faults may creep in, but as they are not serious, they will not deprive us of the fruit of our resolutions; they will only keep away the pleasure that would arise from steering clear of all failure, if the state of this life permitted such a thing.

Moreover, be just; neither accuse nor excuse your poor soul until after mature consideration, for fear that if you excuse it without reason, you may render it insolent, and if you accuse it without grounds, you may render it pusillanimous. Walk with simplicity, and you will walk with confidence.

That multitude of thoughts bustling about your mind should on no account be attacked, for when

would you succeed in destroying them one after another? It is only necessary from time to time, I mean many times a-day, to deny them entrance altogether, to shut them out in a body, and then to let them play as many freaks at the door of your heart as they choose : provided they do not enter, it is little matter. Remain in peace, and be not troubled, for God is on your side.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE JUST MAN FALLS AND RISES WITHOUT PERCEIVING IT.

It is not said in that passage of Scripture which is so frequently quoted, that the just man sees or perceives himself falling seven times a-day, but that he falls seven times a-day; so he rises often without perceiving that he rises. Wherefore, you are not to be in pain; yet you can mention, if you choose, any thing you may have remarked; committing it to the sweet mercy of Him who places His hand under those who fall without malice, that they may not be hurt, and raises them again so quickly and so gently that they neither perceive they have fallen, because He received them, nor that they are lifted up, because He assists them so suddenly that they have not time to think of it.

Do as little children do: while they see their mother holding them by the sleeve, they walk courageously, run about everywhere; and are not the least surprised at the trips and stoppages they sometimes meet with, through the weakness of their limbs. Thus while you perceive God holding you by the

good will and resolution He has given you to serve Him, walk courageously, and be not astonished at the jolts you get now and again. There is no cause to be grumbling about them, but at intervals cast yourself into His arms and give Him the kiss of charity. Go joyfully, with an open heart; if you cannot always go as joyfully as you would wish, at least go always confidently. Our Lord acts towards us just in the same manner as a good mother, who allows her child to walk alone on a soft meadow, where the grass is thick, or on a mossy bank, because she knows that if it falls, it will not be hurt, but on the rough dangerous road she carries it carefully in her arms. We have often seen souls, who endured manfully the greatest assaults without being overcome, yet fell a little after before a mere shadow. And why was it so, unless because Our Lord knowing that they would not be much the worse of it, allowed them to walk alone in an easy place, which He would not do along the perilous precipices of great temptations, where the hand of His omnipotence would be indispensably necessary?

CHAPTER XIX.

A GOOD SADNESS AND A BAD SADNESS.

SADNESS may be either good or bad.

The sadness which is according to God, says St. Paul, worketh penance unto salvation, and the sadness of the world worketh death. Sadness can then be good or bad, according to the different effects it produces in us. In truth it has more bad than good

effects, for it has only two of the latter, namely, mercy and penance, while it has six of the former, namely, anguish, idleness, indignation, jealousy, envy, and impatience. This made the Wise Man say that *sadness has killed many*, and that *there is nothing to be gained by it*, because for the two good little streams that flow from it, there are six very bad ones.

The enemy makes use of sadness to try the perseverance of the good; for, as he endeavours to rejoice the wicked in their sins, so he endeavours to sadden the just in their good works, and as he cannot draw them to evil unless by making them find it pleasant, so he cannot turn them away from good unless by making them find it wearisome. The devil asks only for sadness and melancholy; and as he is sad and melancholy himself, and will be so eternally, he wishes that every one else should become like him.

Bad sadness troubles the soul, throws it into uneasiness, inspires it with inordinate fears, and fills it with disgust for prayer; stupifies and confuses the brain; deprives the soul of counsel, resolution, judgment, courage, and entirely abases its powers. In a word, it is like a severe winter, which banishes all beauty from the earth, and benumbs the very animals; for it robs the soul of all consolation, and strikes its every faculty with helplessness.*

* "Bad sadness casts down the soul, makes it lose confidence in God and relish for holy exercises, and encourages it to seek amusements without, to distract it from that which it suffers within; the other, on the contrary, if you really wish to give the name of sadness to that sorrow so worthy of a Christian, inclines one to prayer and fervour in the service of God, spreads

King David does not complain of sadness alone, saying: "Why art thou sad, O my soul?" but chiefly of trouble and uneasiness, adding: Why dost thou trouble me?" A good sadness leaves great peace and tranquillity in the soul. On this account, Our Lord, after having said to His apostles: *You shall be sad*, adds: *let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid*. "*In peace is my bitterness most bitter*," says Isaias. Bad sadness comes like a hailstorm, with an unexpected change, and great impetuosity, and so suddenly that we cannot tell whence it comes; for it has no foundation. But after its arrival, it seeks on all sides to be obeyed; while good sadness comes sweetly into the soul like a gentle rain, and with rational antecedents.

Bad sadness ruins the heart, dulling and deadening it, and making it abandon the care of the work, as the Psalmist says, or as Agar did when she left her son under the tree to go and weep. Good sadness gives strength and courage, and does not allow us to leave off or abandon a good design: such was the sadness of Our Lord, which, although so great that there never was the like, yet it did not prevent Him from praying and having care of His disciples. And Our Lady, having lost her Son, was most sad; yet it did not hinder her from seeking Him diligently: as did Magdalen also: without waiting to lament and weep in vain.

Bad sadness darkens the understanding, takes away counsel, resolution, and judgment from the soul, as happened to those of whom the Psalmist
a divine unction through the soul, and moves it to seek solitude and intercourse with God, in whom alone it finds its consolation."—*P. Lombes*.

says: *They were troubled and reeled like a drunken man; and all their wisdom was swallowed up* (Psalm cvi. 27). We seek for remedies here and there confusedly, without knowing what we do, and as it were groping our way. Good sadness opens the mind, makes it serene and luminous, and, as the Psalmist says, gives understanding.

Bad sadness gives a disgust for prayer and a distrust of the goodness of God; good sadness, on the contrary, proceeding from God, increases our confidence in Him, and makes us pray and invoke His mercy. *Tribulation and anguish have troubled me; but thy commandments have been my meditation.*

In short, those who are possessed of a bad sadness have their souls troubled with ever so many horrors, errors, and useless fears, with dread of being abandoned by God, of being in His disfavour, of being unfit to appear before Him in order to ask pardon. Every thing seems to go contrary to their salvation; they are like Cain, who thought every one he should meet would kill him. They think that God is unjust towards them, and will be severe to them even to eternity, and that it is all in their regard alone, while the rest of the world is perfectly happy at their expense: all which proceeds from a secret pride, persuading them that they ought to be better and more fervent than others, more perfect than any one else.*

* Reflect that sadness is good for nothing; that far from remedying the smallest evil, it is in itself a great evil; that it destroys our health, shortens our life, prevents us from enjoying piety and advancing in virtue, and puts our eternal salvation in danger; it makes us disagreeable to God and man, and insupportable to ourselves; no person likes to see us sad

But good sadness discourses in this manner: "I am a miserable, vile, and abject creature, and therefore God will show me mercy; for power is made perfect in infirmity, and there is nothing astonishing in being poor and miserable."

Now, the foundation of the difference that exists between good and bad sadness is that the Holy Spirit is the author of good sadness, and, because He is the true Comforter, His operations are ever accompanied with sweetness and light.

In fine, since He is the true good, His operations cannot be separated from the true Good; and *the fruits of the Holy Ghost*, says St. Paul, *are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, longanimity.*

On the contrary, the wicked spirit, who is the author of a bad sadness—for I do not here speak of natural sadness, which has more need of physicians than of theologians—is truly a gloomy and perplexing destroyer, and its fruits can only be hatred, melancholy, uneasiness, chagrin, languor, malice. Lastly, all the marks of a bad sadness are also the marks of a bad timidity.

except our enemies, and particularly the enemies of our salvation; we become, in this state, the scourge of society, the shame of our neighbours, the affliction of our friends, the mocking-stock of our enemies, the outcast of all. If we retire into solitude, we are worn out with *ennui*, and if we give ourselves to the affairs of public life, we succeed as ill; we are good for nothing. Every thing tires us, every thing is insupportable to us; time lasts too long for us, and life itself is a burden to us.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW CONTRARY SADNESS IS TO DIVINE LOVE.

WE cannot engraft an oak on a pear tree, so contrary are these two trees to each other. We can no more engraft anger or despair on charity. As for despair, unless we reduce it to a just diffidence of ourselves, or rather to that reasonable sentiment we ought to have of the vanity, weakness, and inconstancy of the favours, helps, and promises of the world, I do not know what service divine love can draw from it.*

How can sadness be useful to holy charity, since among the fruits of the Holy Ghost, joy holds the very next place to charity? Nevertheless the Great Apostle speaks thus: *The sadness which is according to God worketh penance unto salvation, but the sadness of the world worketh death.* There is then a *sadness according to God*; which is exercised either by sinners in penance, or by the good in compassion for the temporal miseries of the neighbour, or by the perfect in deploring the spiritual calamities of souls; for David, St. Peter, Magdalen, wept over their sins; Agar wept seeing her son nearly dead of thirst,

* "Have pity on your soul by making it agreeable to God, repress all your evil desires, centre the sentiments of your heart in the sanctity of God, and drive sadness from you; for it has killed many, and is of no advantage." This is the counsel of the Wise Man, or rather of the Holy Spirit.

Be not discouraged; miseries, frailties, etc., are diseases, but discouragement is a kind of death.

Sadness serves only to increase the pains of this life.

Jeremias wept over the ruin of Jerusalem, Our Lord over the Jews, and His great Apostle mourning uttered these words: *Many walk, of whom I have often told you and now tell you again, weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ.*

There is, also, a *sadness of this world*; which proceeds from three causes:—

1. It sometimes proceeds from the infernal enemy, who, by a thousand sad, melancholy, and vexatious suggestions, darkens the understanding, weakens the will, and troubles the whole soul; and, as a thick fog fills the head and chest with cold, by this means rendering respiration difficult, and throwing the traveller into perplexity, so the devil, filling the human mind with sad thoughts, takes away its facility of making aspirations to God, and thus casts it into an extreme weariness and discouragement. It is said that there is a fish called the devil of the sea, which, heaving up the mud, discolours the water all around it, in order to conceal itself, as in an ambush, from which, when it perceives the poor little fishes, it suddenly rushes out, tearing and devouring them: whence, perhaps, comes the expression of “fishing in troubled waters,” which we hear so frequently used. Now, it is just the same with the devil of hell as with the devil of the sea; for he lays his ambush in sadness, and, having troubled the soul with a multitude of distressing thoughts, cast here and there through the understanding, he rushes out afterwards on the affections, crushing them down with doubts, jealousies, aversions, envies, apprehensions, and supplying a variety of vain, bitter, and melancholy subtleties, in order that we may reject all kinds of reasons and consolations in our wants.

2. Sadness proceeds at other times from our natural condition, when the melancholic humour predominates within us, and though this is evidently not vicious in itself, yet the enemy makes great use of it to brew a thousand temptations in our souls; for, as spiders only make their webs when the weather is dark and the sky cloudy, so the devil has never the same ease in laying the snares of his suggestions around sweet, benign, and gay souls, as he has when in the presence of melancholy, gloomy, and hypochondriac ones; for he easily agitates the latter with chagrins, murmurs, hatreds, envies, and a thousand dark suspicions.

3. There is a sadness which the variety of human occurrences brings upon us. *What joy can I have,* said Tobias, *not being able to see the light of heaven?* Thus Jacob was sad at the news of the death of his Joseph, and David at that of his Absalom. Now, this sadness is common to the good and to the bad, but with the good it is moderated by acquiescence in and resignation to the will of God, as we see in Tobias, who, for all the adversities that befell him, returned thanks to the Divine Majesty, and in Job, who blessed the name of the Lord for afflictions, and in Daniel, who changed his sorrows into canticles. On the contrary, with worldlings, this sadness is an ordinary companion, and changes only into regrets, despair, and giddiness of mind; for they are like monkeys and marmots, which are always peevish, cross, and troublesome at the waning of the moon, as at its increase they jump, dance, and play their pranks to no end. The worldling is surly, sullen, and snappish in the absence of prosperity; and in its

full flow, he is invariably a conceited and insolent blusterer.

Indeed, the sadness of true penance does not so much deserve the name of sadness as of displeasure against sin, or detestation of sin: a sadness which is never vexed or morose; a sadness which does not enervate the mind, but makes it active, prompt, and diligent; a sadness which dispirits not the heart, but elevates it to prayer and hope, and excites the fervour of devotion; a sadness which always, even in the height of its bitterness, produces the sweetness of an incomparable consolation, according to the words of the great St. Augustine: "Let the penitent be always sad, but let him always rejoice in his sadness." "The sadness," says Cassian, "which works a solid penance and an agreeable repentance, of which we never repent, is obedient, affable, humble, kind, gracious, patient, as being the offspring of charity: so much so, that, reaching to every pain of body and mind, it is in a manner joyful, re-animated, and re-invigorated, by the prospect of its advantage; it retains all the sweetness of benignity and longanimity, having with it the fruits of the Holy Ghost mentioned by the Apostle: *Now, the fruits of the Holy Ghost are charity, joy, peace, longanimity, goodness, benignity, faith, meekness, continence.*" Such is true penance, and such is a good sadness, which, properly speaking, is not at all sad or melancholy, but only attentive and resolute to detest and reject sin, both past and future, for the sole love of God, whom sin displeases, that is to say, without the admixture of any imperfect love, without interested views of promised reward or punishment.

This loving repentance is usually practised by frequent aspirations or elevations of the heart to God, after the example of the ancient penitents. Thus:—*I am thine, O my God, save me, have mercy on me, for my soul has trusted in thee; save me, O Lord, for the waters overwhelm my heart; make me as one of thy hired servants; O Lord! be propitious to me: to me a poor sinner.*

In this sense, we say that prayer justifies; for penitent prayer, or suppliant repentance, elevates the soul to God, and, uniting it to His goodness, undoubtedly obtains pardon in virtue of the love which animates it.

Many a time we see a repentance eager, troubled, impatient, weeping, bitter, sighing, uneasy, sour, and melancholy, which in the end is found unfruitful, and without any true amendment, because it does not proceed from the true motives of the virtue of penance, but from self-love and natural love.

The sadness of the world worketh death, says the Apostle. We must then carefully avoid it, and banish it according to our power. If it be natural we should drive it off by diverting its movements in suitable exercises, and by attending to the remedies and mode of life which physicians judge proper. If it proceed from temptations, we should discover our heart to our spiritual father, who will prescribe us the means of overcoming them, according to that which we have said in the Fourth Part of the *Introduction to a Devout Life*. If it be accidental, we should have recourse to that which is laid down in the Eighth Book, in order to see how amiable tribulations are to the children of God, and how the

greatness of our hopes in eternal life should render almost unworthy of a thought the trifling and transitory occurrences of this life.

There are some actions that depend on physical power; hence, however melancholy one may be, he can still, though without much pleasure, say kind and civil words, and, notwithstanding his inclinations, perform from reason things conformable in word and work to charity and courtesy. A person is excusable if not always gay, for we are not masters of gaiety to have it when we wish, but we are inexcusable if we are not always good, tractable, and obliging, for we have it in the power of our will to be so; and all that is required is to resolve to overcome our contrary humours and inclinations.

I certainly do not know why souls that have given themselves up to the divine goodness should not be always joyful; for is there any happiness equal to theirs? I would wish that we could sing everywhere. The imperfections you fall into ought not to trouble you; for you do not wish to cherish them, or to rest your affections in them. Remain then in peace, and live in meekness and humility of heart.

What a happiness to belong entirely to God! For He loves His own, He protects them, He conducts them, He brings them into the harbour of a desirable eternity. Remain then thus, and never permit your soul to be saddened, or to be in bitterness or scrupulosity, since He who loved it, and who died to make it live, is so good, so sweet, so amiable.*

* "It is only the devil and the damned that ought to be sad, because their lot is decided for eternity, and their misfortune is beyond resource. Sinners obstinate in guilt will share the

CHAPTER XXI.

REMEDIES FOR A BAD SADNESS.*

First remedy. We must receive sadness with patience, as a just punishment for our past vain gladness and joy; for the devil, seeing that we turn it to our profit, will not press it much upon us, and so long as we preserve a willingness not to be delivered, except according to the good-pleasure of God, our patience will not fail to serve as a remedy.

Second remedy. We must sharply contradict the inclinations of sadness, and repel its suggestions, and, while it appears that every thing we do then is done sadly, we must not discontinue our affairs; for the enemy, who desires by sadness to make us relent in

same fate; and, if there is sadness on earth, it is with them, since they take hell for their portion."—*P. Lombes.*

* "Were any one to ask me how a sad soul may be delivered from interior suffering, I would answer by an example. There was a servant of God, a friend of the eternal wisdom, who, in the beginning of his conversion, was subject to fits of deep melancholy; not only did he lose all relish for reading and prayer, but he found it impossible to work. One day, as he sat in his chamber, abandoned to dejection, he heard an interior voice, which said to him: 'Why remain thus, sad and doing nothing? why be consumed and wasted in the anguish of melancholy? Take courage, arise, do violence to thyself, meditate on my Passion and cruel sufferings, and thou wilt overcome thy grief.' The servant of God obeyed; meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ banished his sadness, and by continuing in this holy exercise, he cured his soul, and was never more subject to melancholy."—*B. Suso.*

the performance of good works, seeing that he gains nothing, but that, on the contrary, our works are better done, being done with reluctance, will soon cease to afflict us any longer.

Third remedy. When one is able, it is not amiss to sing some spiritual songs; for the devil has often been made by such means, on some account or other, to abandon his operations. Witness the spirit that agitated Saul, which was quieted by the sacred music of the harp.

Fourth remedy. It is good to employ one's self in some external occupation, and to diversify it as much as possible in order to preserve the mind from intense application to any sad object; to purify and warm the spirits, or, as we say, to raise them, sadness being a passion of a cold and humid character.*

Fifth remedy. Perform some exterior acts of piety, though you do so without any relish, such as embracing the crucifix, pressing it to your breast, or kissing the hands and feet, raising your hands and eyes to heaven, uttering some words of love and confidence like these: *My well-beloved is all mine, and I am all his; my beloved is a bouquet of myrrh on my heart. My eyes are wearied looking up on high; my God, I*

* "Take a walk on beautiful days, in places where the air is pure, and where the sight of nature will enchant the imagination, and drive far away those dark and dismal images which real evils, or, more dangerous still, the melancholy humour had impressed upon it.

"A walk, with the elasticity of the air, sets the blood and other fluids in motion, refines and purifies the humours; the powers of our body resume their natural play; every thing takes back its tone; melancholy is dissipated, and joy returns."—*P. Lombes.*

will never cease to say: when wilt thou comfort me? O Jesus, be a Jesus to me. Live Jesus! and may my soul live! Who will separate me from the love of my God? and other like things.

Sixth remedy. A moderate discipline is sometimes good, because the voluntary affliction of the exterior impetrates interior consolation for the soul, and while applying pains to the body without, we feel less the effect of those within, according to that which the Psalmist says: *But as for me, when he afflicted me, I clothed myself with hair-cloth.* And elsewhere, perhaps to the same purpose; *Thy rod and thy staff have comforted me.*

Seventh remedy. Prayer is the sovereign remedy, according to the expression of St. James: *If any one be sad, let him pray.* I do not mean that we must employ our time of prayer in long meditations, but I mean that, during it, we must make frequent petitions to God; we must always then address His divine goodness in invocations full of confidence, which we are apt to forget when in joy, and likewise, when free from trouble, imagining that there is no longer any need to excite sentiments of fear in our hearts; for example, such as these: "O Lord, most just and terrible, oh! how I tremble before Thy sovereign Majesty!" and the like. But in times of sadness, we must employ words of sweetness, for example: "O God of mercy, most good and most gracious, Thou art my heart, my joy, my hope, the dear spouse of my soul," and the like; and we must employ them, whether sadness likes it or not, giving it no audience or credit when endeavouring to prevent us from uttering these words of confidence and love; and though we seem to do so without fruit, we must not cease to expect the fruit, which will

not fail to appear after a little perseverance.* Frequent communion is also an excellent means of banishing sadness, for this heavenly bread strengthens the heart and rejoices the mind by giving us the Master of consolations.

Eighth remedy. One of the safest remedies is to discover our heart, without concealing any thing, to some prudent and spiritual person, mentioning to him the resentments, attachments, and suggestions that proceed from our sadness, and the reasons with which we entertain them; and all this humbly and faithfully. The first condition that the devil imposes on a soul which he wishes to afflict and seduce, is silence, just as the seditious do in conspiracies, for they require above all things that their undertakings and resolutions should be kept secret. God, on the contrary, requires discretion as the first condition: not wishing indeed that we should indiscreetly discover His graces and favours, but that we should make them known with prudence, and according to the rules of an humble discretion, to persons endowed with the requisite qualities.

But, in fine, if you do not find repose in these

* "Prayer, which is the great remedy for all evils, is singularly the remedy we should employ against sadness. The Apostle St. James points it out to us: *If there be any one sad among you, he says, let him have recourse to prayer.* Our soul cannot communicate with God, but the sight of this ravishing object will carry it into joy, and make it share in the divine happiness. Having promised to grant us all that we ask of Him with the requisite conditions, how can He reject a prayer so legitimate as that of dissipating the sadness which hell has breathed into our hearts, which is the mortal poison of our souls, and which hinders us from contemplating Him, from loving Him, and from tasting Him as He desires?"—*P. Lombes.*

remedies, have patience; wait till the sun rises, it will dissipate the mist; have good courage, *this sickness will not be to death, but that God may be glorified by it.* Act like those who feel their stomach sick and disordered at sea; for, after they have tumbled about, both in mind and body, through the whole vessel, in order to find some alleviation, they at last take hold of the mast, and embrace it as fast as possible in order to be secure against the turnings which they experience in their head: it is true, their comfort is brief and uncertain. But if, with humility, you embrace the foot of the cross, when you cannot find a remedy anywhere else, you will at least find patience there sweeter than elsewhere, and trouble less disagreeable.

Rejoice as much as you can in doing good; for it is a double grace in good works, to be well done and to be joyfully done.* And when I say: in doing

* "If Jesus Christ, our Divine Master, never laughed, it was because the plenitude of His perfections placed Him above all human imperfections; and laughter is one of them, but inseparable from our condition. God does not condemn it, because we are neither gods nor angels. Laughter proceeds from a sudden joy caused by the sight or thought of some object agreeable and new, or newly remembered; hence our Divine Saviour, to whom all things were continually present, was not susceptible of that sudden joy which novelty causes. Moreover, His soul, enjoying continually the beatific vision, was capable only of sentiments divinely-human; so that if He never laughed, neither was He ever sad, according to the words of the prophet Isaias: *Non erit tristis neque turbulentus.* If on the eve of His Passion He said that He was overwhelmed with a mortal sadness, this ought to be understood only of the impression of sadness on the imagination and on the senses, and not of sadness itself, of which His ever-blessed soul was incapable."—*P. Lombes.*

good, I do not mean to say that when you fall into some defect, you should abandon yourself to sadness on that account: no, in the name of God, for that would be to add defect to defect; but I mean to say that you should persevere in wishing to do good, and that you should always return to good as soon as you know you have departed from it, and that, by means of this fidelity, you should live for the most part joyfully.

In fine, we should belong to God without reserve, without division, without exception, and without any other pretensions than the honour of being His. If we had a single thread of affection in our heart that did not belong to Him, O God! we ought this very instant to tear it away. Let us then remain in peace, and say with the great lover of the cross: *Let no one come to disturb me; for, as for me, I carry in my heart the stigmas of my Jesus.* Yes, my dearest daughter, if we knew a single piece of our heart not to be marked with the stamp of the crucifix, we should not wish to retain it for one moment. What good is there in being disquieted? *My soul, hope in God; why art thou sad, and why dost thou trouble me, since God is my God, and my heart is a heart entirely His?**

* God wishes to be served with joy. This is the glory and pleasure of good masters; the sadness and sorrow of servants dishonour and disgrace their masters.

CHAPTER XXII.

JOYS IN SUFFERINGS.

LET us cast ourselves at the foot of the crucifix, and consider our pains in comparison with the cross and the injuries which Our Lord endured : by this means the heaviness of our afflictions will appear light and little, and sometimes so agreeable that we shall far prefer suffering to the enjoyment of any other consolation, separated from suffering. Alas ! when we see Our Saviour, after a thousand opprobriums, crucified and dead amid thorns and nails, and near Him Our Lady and St. John in the midst of the wonderful and terrible darkness that happened during His Passion, we should say that, without a doubt, crosses and afflictions are more amiable than contentments and delights ; inasmuch as the Wisdom of God chose them for Himself and for His truest and most beloved servants. Ah ! how great a grace it ought to be for us to be a little crucified with Our Lord, and to be able to testify our love towards Him in the midst of tribulations, as He testified His love towards us during His Passion !*

* "The soldier is too cowardly who wishes to remain always in the shade, and it is rather delicate a thing to wish to live at one's ease both in this world and in the next. It is written ; *Woe to you who laugh, for you shall one day weep !* Be not astonished then, O Christian, if Jesus Christ gives you a share in His sufferings, that He may give you a share in His glory, and if He allows you to feel some of the many

The remedies prescribed by physicians, and the medicines presented by apothecaries, are often rejected by the sick, but being offered by some beloved hand, love overcomes horror, and they are received with joy. Here is a little sick child, that, without seeing its mother, and merely from the knowledge it has of her will, takes every thing brought to it, and uses food without any pleasure, for it has no pleasure in eating, nor has it the contentment of seeing its mother, but it eats and drinks simply to do her will. My God, why in like manner does not the good-pleasure of Our Lord make bitterness amiable, pain delightful, and agony desirable to us, when God seems to be gratified with it?

Mystic bees make their most excellent honey in the wounds of the lion of the tribe of Juda, slaughtered, rent, and torn in pieces on Mount Calvary; and the children of the cross glory in their admirable riddle which the world cannot understand: from death which devours all, comes forth the meat of our consolation, and from death, stronger than all, comes forth the sweetness of the honey of our love.

Let us then unite our pains with the torments of Jesus Christ, that the former may be enriched by the value and merit of the latter, and let us believe that our sufferings can never, either in quantity or in quality, be compared with those of Our Lord and His saints; never can we suffer anything for Him in comparison with that which He has suffered for us.*

thorns that pierced His head. Is it to be maltreated, to be treated like Jesus Christ? or is it not the greatest misfortune, to be left in repose?"—*Bossuet*.

* St. Ludwina furnishes us with an admirable example of this resignation. She suffered the most cruel pains for thirty-

This is the motive which made the saints receive the affronts, calumnies, and opprobriums that the world heaped on them, as an extreme favour and a singular honour; hence they gloried in their crucifix and in the annihilation of themselves, having more content, joy, glory, and felicity on the throne of the cross, than ever Solomon had on his throne of ivory, and their love was so strong and so powerful that the waters of tribulation and rivers of persecution could not extinguish it.

The virtues that spring up in the midst of prosperity are usually slender and weak, and those that grow in the midst of adversity are strong and robust, just as we see that the best vines grow among stones.*

I beg of God that He may be always in the midst of your heart, that it may not be moved by every

eight years, obliged to remain continually in bed. Yet, when her sufferings were at the worst, she thus sweetly addressed herself to God: "O my Lord, may I receive in good part the strokes of Thy hand, and may I be content to see that Thou dost not spare my body from pains, for it is a great mark that Thou hast some good design over me! I am like a little clay, O my Creator! in Thy divine hands; give me then, I beg of Thee, the shape Thou judgest proper, for Thy glory and for my salvation, and do not fear to meet with any resistance in me."

* All the saints have acknowledged, after St. Paul, that a body full of health and without suffering, is a great obstacle to sanctity. The seal, says St. Diadochus in his *Treatise on Perfection*, cannot lay its impress on wax that is as hard as a stone; we must of necessity soften the wax at the fire. In like manner, God can scarcely lay the impress of His perfections on a soul that is not prepared, and, as it were, softened by infirmities of body; for health and prosperity make it hard against the touches of grace, while sorrows soften it.

wind, and that, giving you a share of His cross, He may communicate to you His holy patience and divine love, which render tribulations so precious.

Keep a holy silence, for truly it is good to spare our words for God and for His glory. God has held you by His good hand in your affliction. But, moreover, dear daughter, we must act thus always. "My God!" said St. Gregory to an afflicted Bishop, "how is it possible that our hearts, which have been elevated to heaven, can ever be disturbed by the occurrences of earth?" This was well said: the very sight of our dear Jesus crucified can sweeten in one moment all our sorrows, which are only flowers in romparison with His thorns. And since our grand cendevvous is eternity, what is the value of any thing that passes with time?

Consider that this mortal life is full of trials to which every one is subject, that consolations are rare and labours innumerable, and therefore that we are in a state in which we must expect more of the bread of bitterness than honey, with the assurance, nevertheless, that He for whom we suffer and for whom we have resolved to nourish holy patience in the midst of opposition, will in due season bestow on us the consolations of His Holy Spirit; changing the nails and thorns of contradiction into a collection of precious pearls for eternity, and giving at the same time a new lustre and splendour to our charity. We are told of a fire which wonderfully burns in water; in like manner, holy charity is so strong that it nourishes its flames amid the waters of adversity.

Let us represent to ourselves the crown of heaven, which is not given without victory, and victory, which is not given without war; we shall then

regard the combat of tribulation as agreeable. Ah! if we lifted up our eyes to heaven, we should see that not one of the mortals who are now immortal there, arrived in it by any other way than that of continual trouble and affliction: why then do we complain of the little difficulties which God sends us, and fail in patience for a trifle, when the smallest drop of humility would suffice to make us support patiently that which happens to us justly for our sins?*

When He places before our eyes some pains, labours, and dangers, to which we are of necessity compelled to submit, let us immolate ourselves in spirit to the good-pleasure of God, and tenderly kiss this cross, remembering the general consolation that is to be found in almost all the evils of this life, namely, the hope that they will not be permanent, and that we shall soon see their end. Then let us cry out from the depth of our heart, in imitation of St. Andrew; "We hail thee, O precious cross; we hail thee,

* "Formerly, under the law of Moses, the Lord promised the fruits of the earth to those who should walk in His commandments. On the contrary, since delivering Himself to the death of the cross, as a voluntary victim, He wishes that we should believe, in opposition to our senses, that sufferings are a favour, and persecutions a reward. All do not understand this word; but let him who has ears to hear, hear; and let him whose heart is opened to the Gospel, understand these truths, and adore their salutary rigour.

"Great prosperity is usually a punishment, and chastisements are favours. For what son is there, says the Apostle, whose father does not correct him? The Lord mercifully chastises the children whom He loves. Persevere, then, under His discipline. If He spares you the rod and correction, fear lest He reserves you for torment."—*Bossuet*.

O blessed tribulation; how amiable thou art, O holy affliction, descended from the amiable bosom of the Father of eternal mercy, and destined for us from all eternity!"

The only cure for most of our maladies and infirmities, whether corporal or spiritual, is patience and conformity to the will of God, resigning ourselves to His good-pleasure without reserve or exception, in health, in sickness, in contempt, in honour in consolation, in desolation, in time, and in eternity; willingly accepting every trouble both of mind and body from His most amiable hand, as if we saw it present; even offering ourselves to endure more, if it should seem good to Him. No one can tell how pure and meritorious such an acceptance of the divine will renders our sufferings, when we not only receive them with meekness and patience, but cherish them, love them, and caress them, on account of the divine good-pleasure from which they proceed.

As a branch of agnus-castus drives away weariness from the traveller who carries it, so the cross, the mortification, the yoke, the law of the Saviour, who is the true Chaste-Lamb, is a burden which refreshes, solaces, and recreates those hearts that love His Divine Majesty. There is no labour in that which is loved; or, if there be labour, it is a beloved labour: labour blended with holy love is a kind of bitter-sweet more agreeable to the taste than pure sweetness.

Are you aware of what shepherds in Arabia do, when they perceive the approach of thunder and lightning? They retire under the laurel-trees, both themselves and their flocks. When we observe that persecutions and contradictions threaten us with some

great annoyance, we must take shelter, both we and our afflictions, under the holy cross, by a true confidence that all will turn to the good of those who love God.

Keep up your heart then; remove anxieties; often cast your confidence on the Providence of Our Lord; and be assured that heaven and earth will sooner pass away than that Our Lord will fail to protect you, so long as you are His obedient child, or at least desirous to be so. Two or three times a-day examine whether your heart is not disquieted about something, and, finding that it is, endeavour upon the spot to reinstate it in repose.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CROSS OF THE GOOD THIEF.

SOLOMON says that all that passes under the sun is vanity and affliction of spirit. There is no man under the sun who can avoid the cross and sufferings; but the wicked, sinners are, contrary to their liking and in spite of their will, fastened to the cross and to tribulations, and by their impatience render their crosses hurtful; they have sentiments of esteem for themselves, like those of the bad thief; by this means they unite their crosses with that of this wicked man, and infallibly their reward will be the same.

The good thief transformed a bad cross into a cross of Jesus Christ. Certainly, the fatigues, the injuries, the tribulations that we receive are thieves' crosses, and we have well deserved them; we ought then to

say humbly with the good thief: *We receive in our sufferings that which we have deserved by our sins.* It is thus we shall, by our humility, render our thief's cross, the cross of a true Christian. Let us, then, like the good thief, unite our sinner's cross with the cross of Him who has saved us; and, by this loving and devout union of our sufferings with the sufferings and cross of Jesus Christ, we shall enter, like so many good thieves, into His friendship and company in paradise.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CROSSES OF PROVIDENCE ARE THE MOST AGREEABLE
TO GOD.

If any one will come after me, says Our Lord, *let him take up his cross and follow me.* To take up one's cross cannot mean any thing else than that we should receive and suffer all the pains, contradictions, afflictions, and mortifications that happen to us in this life, without any exception, with an entire submission and indifference.

Let us often immolate our heart to the love of Jesus, even on the altar of the cross, where He immolated His for the love of us. The cross is the royal gate by which we enter into the temple of sanctity; he who seeks for it elsewhere, will not find a trace of it.

The best crosses are the weightiest, and the weightiest are those which we receive most reluctantly, according to the inferior portion of the soul.

The crosses we meet with in the street are excellent, and still more those we find in the house, and in proportion as they are more teasing, they are better; they are of much greater value than disciplines, fasts, and every thing else that austerity has invented. Here, indeed, appears the generosity of the children of the cross, and of the inhabitants of the sacred mount of Calvary.

The crosses we impose on ourselves are always put on in a mincing kind of way, because they are our own, and therefore they are less meritorious. Humble yourself, and receive those joyfully that are imposed on you without your selection. The length of the cross much increases its value; be faithful unto death, and you shall have the crown of life. You are fond of the crucifix; what then would you wish to be, unless crucified?

Our Lord gave David his choice of the rod with which he should be scourged: and God be praised! But it appears to me that I would not have chosen; I would have left it all to His Divine Majesty. The more a cross is from God, the more we ought to love it.

Let us receive with love the crosses that we have not chosen, that God gives us from His hand; let us bless them, let us love them: they are all perfumed with the excellent odour of the place from which they come. Where there is less of our own choice, there is more of the good-pleasure of God. I infinitely prefer the evil that comes to us from our Heavenly Father before that which comes to us from our own will.

Our Lord has well shown us that it is not necessary we should choose our crosses, but that it is

necessary we should take and carry such as are presented to us; for when He was about to die, in order to redeem us, and satisfy the will of His Heavenly Father, He did not choose His cross, but humbly received that which the Jews had prepared for Him.

I particularly love the evil that the sole choice of our Heavenly Father sends us, and much prefer it to that which we might select ourselves.

Behold true virtue, and how it ought to be practised. Seneca showed it a long time ago in a beautiful expression; I wish it were St. Augustine who had uttered the words: *The perfection of man consists in suffering all things well, as if they happened to him of his own choice.*

To suffer for God is to fill our hands with the purest and most precious gold wherewith to purchase heaven. A single package, if I may so speak, of this divine gold, suffices to put us in possession of the glory of paradise. "A moment of light tribulation," says St. Paul, "worketh for us an immense weight of glory." The same observation hardly applies to our ordinary actions; we may say that the most virtuous, compared with afflictions, are only common money, a gross metal. A great deal of such is required to procure any thing of value, and it often happens that such money is counterfeit, because, in most of our good works, our self-love enters, and alters their purity.

Christian perfection consists in suffering well. To acquire solid virtues, complain not of your pains. Endure contradictions patiently. God gives you an occasion of practising patience; would you wish to let it escape? Perhaps in your life, you will

never meet the like of it again; perhaps it may be the last service you will render to His Divine Majesty. Be constant, and He will bless you in your affliction.*

Let us love our crosses; seen with the eyes of love, they are all of gold, and though Our Lord is dead there in the midst of nails and thorns, there is found in the cross a collection of precious pearls that will compose our crown of glory, if we courageously carry our crown of thorns. The time of afflictions and contradictions is the beautiful harvest-time, when the soul gathers in the richest benedictions of heaven; one day then is more profitable than six at another time. Let us, therefore, be always fastened to the cross, and let a hundred thousand arrows transpierce our flesh, provided the inflamed dart of the love of God has previously penetrated our heart; and let this divine wound make us die of its holy death, which is more precious than a thousand lives. In what can we testify our love towards Him who suffered so much for us, if not in the midst of contradictions, repugnances, and aversions? Let us cast ourselves upon the thorns of difficulties, let us allow our heart to be transfixed with the lance of contradictions, let us drink the vinegar and gall of temporal afflictions, since our sweet Saviour wishes it to be so; as the flowers grow among thorns, so

* All the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the immense weight of glory that is prepared for you. Have courage, then: when evils are greatest and most desperate, they are nearest their end. Cease not to suffer. The time is short. We must complete that which is wanting in us, to the Passion of Jesus Christ.

divine love increases better in the midst of tribulation than in the midst of comfort.*

Oh! how happy are the souls that to acquire love, drink courageously the chalice of sufferings with Our Lord, mortify themselves, carry their cross, and suffer and receive willingly from His divine hand every kind of occurrence with submission to His good-pleasure! But, my God! how few there are who do these things as they ought! We meet often enough with souls who desire to suffer and to carry the cross, and I know there are some who even ask afflictions from God, but it is on condition that He will frequently visit and console them in their pains and sufferings, and that He will show them He is much pleased with their sufferings, and intends to reward them with eternal glory. There are also many who desire, like the two disciples, to know the degree of glory they shall have in heaven: certainly, this desire is rather impertinent; for we should never, in any manner, inquire into that, but occupy ourselves always in serving His Divine Majesty as faithfully as we can, observing His divine commandments, His counsels, and His wishes most exactly, and with as much perfection, purity,

* “We must ask to know how to suffer well, since we ought to profit by the grave lessons which suffering gives: its first is obedience. St. Teresa always obeyed, even when her directors contended with the Spirit of God within her; she was submissive, because she had suffered much and well. We must be kind towards suffering: it is a faithful and devoted friend, that brings us true blessings; it gives us solid virtue, which detaches us from every thing. And, besides, when we suffer, we easily humble and abase ourselves.”—*Pere De Ravignan.*

and love as will be possible for us, leaving the care of the rest to His infinite goodness, who will not fail, if we do our duty, to reward us with immortal and incomprehensible glory, by giving Himself to us: so much account does He make of what we do for Him. In a word, He is a good master; we must endeavour to be good and faithful servants to Him, and He will not fail to be a faithful remunerator. Oh! if we knew what a happiness it is to faithfully serve the Divine Saviour of our souls, and to drink of His chalice with Him, oh! how willingly we would embrace pains and sufferings, after the example of the great St. Catherine of Sienna, who preferred the crown of thorns to that of gold! Thus we ought to act; for, in fine, the way of the cross and of affliction is a secure way, and one that leads us straight to God, and to the perfection of His love. If we are faithful to drink courageously of His chalice, crucifying ourselves with Him in this life, His divine goodness will not fail to glorify us eternally in the next.*

* "There are many afflictions that purify man and conduct him to supreme felicity, did he but know how to use them well. God often sends us cruel afflictions without their being deserved; He wishes to prove our constancy, and to show us that we are nothing of ourselves. We have proofs of this in the Old Testament. Sometimes He sends them to manifest His glory, as we see in the Gospel in the case of the man born blind: Our Lord declared, when restoring sight to him, that the man was innocent. Some are struck because they deserve it, as happened to the thief crucified with Jesus Christ; the Saviour promised him eternal life, because he was converted on the cross. Others have not deserved what they suffer, but God wishes to purify them from some faults, to correct their pride, and to humble them by exposing them to injustice.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BEST CROSSES.

LET us, I pray, slightly unmask an error that is found in the minds of many, who do not value or wish to carry the crosses that are presented to them, unless they are rough and heavy. For example, a religious will willingly submit to practise great austerities, to fast, to wear the hair-cloth, to take severe disciplines, and he will have a repugnance to obey when commanded not to fast, or even to take some rest, and such other things, in which he seems to have more satisfaction than pain. Now, you deceive yourself, if you imagine that there is less virtue in overcoming yourself in these things than in things more difficult; for the merit of the cross does not lie in its weight, but in the manner of carrying it. I will go further, and say, that there is sometimes more merit in carrying a cross of straw than a very heavy one, because the lighter crosses are, and the more contemptible, the less conformable are they to our inclinations, which always look to show. And it is a thing most certain that there is always more virtue in not saying a word that has been forbidden us by our superiors,

“There are other afflictions which God permits of His goodness, because they preserve those who suffer them from greater misfortunes. Some make their purgatory here, in sickness, poverty, and adversity, and thus avoid far greater pains; others are a target for the persecutions of the wicked, and, at the hour of their death, God spares them from the assaults of the devils; others, in fine, are tormented by violent passions.”—*B. Suso.*

or even in not raising our eyes to look upon something which we are very anxious to see, and the like, than in wearing the hair-cloth, because when we have put this on our back, there is no need of thinking any more about it. But in these petty practices we must have a continual attention over ourselves, to guard against falling into imperfection.

Now, then, you see very well that the word of Our Lord, which orders you to take up your cross, ought to be understood of receiving readily and indifferently all the obediences that are given you, and all the mortifications and contradictions that you meet with, though they should be light and of little importance, assured as you ought to be, that the merit of the cross does not lie in its weight, but in the perfection with which it is carried.

Truly it is good to mortify one's flesh, but it is especially necessary to purify our affections and to renovate our hearts. God says to us: "Rend and tear your hearts, for it is against them my anger is provoked." This is what we do by these little mortifications, frequently repeated and faithfully practised: to suffer a little rebuke in a spirit of meekness, to act through obedience when we feel much repugnance in doing so, not to complain when we imagine there is great reason why we should, to endure the defects of those with whom we live. It is on these occasions that we must rend our hearts, and make a continual sacrifice of our own wills, our natural inclinations, and give some proofs to God of our love and our fidelity.*

* "God has the goodness to put some of our purgatory into each day; let us accept, embrace the cross which is presented

O God! you will tell me, this is a great renunciation, and it is necessary to be very attentive over one's self not to follow one's own will, and not to seek that which our self-love desires; for it has many artifices to deceive us, and to turn our attention off ourselves. That is true, but there is a remedy. Remember that Our Lord directs us to take up our cross and to follow Him. He says our own cross: which I mention in order to prevent the extravagance of many, who, when some one mortifies them a little, are vexed and annoyed, saying that if such or such a thing had happened to them, or what has happened to another, they would have endured it willingly; and in like manner with sicknesses, for they wish to have that which God has given to another, and not that which He has sent them Himself for their good. This is not to carry our cross as Our Lord wishes us to carry it, and as He has taught us by His example. If then we wish to carry our cross after Him, we must imitate Him by receiving indifferently whatever happens to us, without choice or exception.*

to us. Let us take care not to complain, nor to imagine that suffering is a new invention. A person might easily suppose it was, on seeing our astonishment, and hearing our murmurs. The saints, crushed and ground down by trials of all sorts, seized on suffering as gold from the mine.

“See how the gold taken from the earth is cast into a crucible; had the gold thought and speech, it would cry out: I suffer, take me out of this. And yet this gold is purified, and soon it will shine on the brows of kings, and on the altars of the living God. The cross effects the same in our regard: it is our crucible.—*P. De Ravignan.*”

* “We do not know how to love our well-beloved Saviour, so, we do not know how to love Him. Do you require a

Often in spirit kiss the crosses which Our Lord Himself lays upon your shoulders. Do not look to see whether they are made of a precious or a perfumed wood; they better deserve the name of crosses when they are made of mean, common, worm-eaten wood. I assure you this thought is ever returning to my mind, and I know only this refrain; undoubtedly it is the canticle of the Lamb; it is a little sad, but it is melodious and beautiful: *My Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Magdalen sought our Lord while holding Him; she asked Him of Himself; she did not see Him in the form in which she desired to see Him: on this account she was not content to see Him thus, and sought to find Him otherwise; she wished to see Him in His garments of glory, and not in the mean dress of a gardener; but at length she knew Him when He said, *Mary!*

Do you see, it is Our Lord in the dress of a gardener you meet with every day, here and there, in the various occasions of mortification that present themselves to you? You would much wish Him to offer you other more beautiful mortifications. O God! the most beautiful are not the best. Do you not think He says to you, *Mary, Mary?* Before you

proof of it? Let us suppose that Our Lord Jesus Christ had not come to suffer and to die on the earth—would there be much change required in our mode of existence, and in our ideas, in order to remove that which is now conformable to His example and His doctrine? Alas! no, we might continue to act as we act; we should have the same aversion for suffering, the same horror of contempt. Is this, then, to love Thee, my beloved Saviour? No, a thousand times, no!"—*P. De Ravignan.*

can see Him in His glory, He wishes to plant in your garden a great many little flowers, small but to His liking; and this is the reason why He is so clad. May our hearts be ever united to His, and our wills to His good-pleasure!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WOOD OF THE TRUE CROSS.

HAPPY are those who suffer persecution for justice' sake; this beatitude, the last in order, is the first in Our Lord's esteem, and I often look upon it as the sovereign happiness of the present life. Those who are unjustly persecuted carry the resemblance of the Saviour better, and lead a life hidden with Jesus Christ in God: they appear wicked and they are good, dead and they are living, poor and they are rich, foolish and they are wise, detested before men and in benediction before God. Persecutions are pieces of the cross of Jesus Christ; we must not allow a particle of them to perish.*

* "The cross can take the place of every thing, and nothing can take its place. He who suffers with patience has no need of any other means of salvation: provided he is in the state of grace, the cross holds the place of all, of great apostolic labours, of high gifts of prayer, of fasts, of hair-cloths, of alms, and of every thing else most splendid that the saints have wrought; let us say still more: accompanied with a great love, it is of more value than all those things. But he who suffers nothing, were he to present to God and man the works of zeal of a St. Francis Xavier, the works of charity of a St. Vincent de Paul, and even greater, would be behind a

I saw, some time ago, a little girl carrying a pitcher of water on her head, and in the middle of it she had put a bit of wood. I wished to know why, and she said that it was to prevent the movement of the water, for fear it should be spilled. Then, henceforward, said I, we must put the cross in the middle of our hearts to prevent the movements of our affections in this wood and by this wood, in order that they may not spill over in uneasiness and trouble of mind.

To suffer is almost the only good we can do in this world; for rarely do we perform any good without mixing up some evil along with it. And, besides, Our Lord is never so near us as when we suffer something for His love.* He watches over us while we repose in peace upon His bosom, and makes us draw advantage from our tribulations.

poor sick patient, united to God, and further away from the conditions of salvation, whose foundation Jesus Christ has made the cross."—*P. Engelvin, Franciscan.*

* "If we shall have any thing to regret at the moment of death, it will be that the time of suffering for God has passed, and consequently the means of enriching ourselves are gone. The privilege of suffering is perhaps the only advantage we have above the angels. They may indeed be the companions of Our Lord, but they cannot be the companions of His death. Those blessed intelligences may well appear before the face of God, as victims burning with an ardent charity, but their impassible nature prevents them from giving one generous proof of their affection in the midst of anguish, or receiving that honour which is so sweet to him who loves, to love even to die, and even to die of love. Oh, how great a grace it is to love and to suffer, to love while suffering, and to suffer while loving! Let us never lose one of our crosses, but let us often say to ourselves: courage! the time of suffering is short, the love that suffering merits is eternal."—*Bossuet.*

On what occasions can we make great acts of the union of our heart with the will of God, of the mortification of our self-love, or of the love of our own abjection, in a word, of our crucifixion, unless during these rough and severe trials? Have I not often told you to divest yourself of all creatures in order to clothe yourself with our crucified Lord? Courage, then! it is Our Lord who wishes thus to prove your heart. It is not severity, it is clemency. Have courage: provided that your heart is faithful to Him, He will not load you above your strength, and He will support your burden with you, when He sees that with a good affection you bow down your shoulders beneath the weight He lays upon you.*

Blessed are the crucified! In this world our inheritance is the cross, in the next it will be glory.

All is over. After the few days of this mortal life which remain to us, a boundless eternity will ensue. It matters little whether we are inconvenienced or inconvenienced here, provided that for all eternity we shall be happy and blessed. Let the thought of this holy eternity which awaits us, the thought of being a Christian, a child of Jesus Christ,

* "If the most ignorant men know the burdens that their poor horses or asses are able to carry, and do not put on too heavy a load for fear of overpowering them; if the potter knows how long the clay should remain in the furnace, in order to be heated to that degree which renders it fit for use, and does not leave it for a moment more or less; we cannot possibly have reflected, or we should not dare to say that God, who is wisdom itself, and who loves us with an infinite love, lays upon our shoulders a weight that is too heavy, or leaves us too long in the fire of tribulation. Let us then be without uneasiness. The fire will not be greater, nor of longer duration, than is required to heat our clay to the necessary degree."—*St. Ephrem.*

regenerated in His blood, be your consolation ; for this alone lies our glory, that Jesus Christ has died for us.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CALUMNIES.

Blessed are they who suffer persecution for Jesus Christ's sake, because their life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God, and made conformable to His image, as He was during His whole life persecuted for Jesus Christ's sake, which, nevertheless, He fulfilled in the most perfect manner. Those who are unjustly persecuted and men are hidden in the secret of God's countenance, they are in detestation before men, but in benediction before God, to whom they are the odour of sacrifice unto life.

Blessed are ye, says Our Lord, when men speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for Jesus Christ's sake. If the world, says St. Paul, did not find anything to say against us, we should not be true servants of God. Care not for human judgment, you will have interior peace.

Disquiet not yourself about that which the world will say of you ; await the judgment of God, you will then judge those who now judge you. Think of Him for whom you labour, and they would endeavour to cause you pain will not distress you in the least. It is only amid the rocks that waves raise noise and froth.

It is said that those who use the preservation called "the charm of St. Paul" do not swell

bitten and stung by a viper, provided the medicine be of good quality; in like manner, when humility and meekness are good and true, they secure us against that inflation and ardour which injuries are accustomed to provoke in our hearts. And if, being stung and bitten by slanderers and enemies, we become fierce, enraged, and spiteful, this is an evident sign that our humility and meekness are not true and sincere, but false and artificial.

If the world contemn us, let us rejoice; for it has reason, since we acknowledge candidly that we are contemptible. If it esteem us, let us contemn its esteem and its judgment; for it is blind. Inquire little of that which the world thinks, put yourself to no trouble about it; let us despise its praise and its dispraise, and let us allow it to say whatever it pleases, whether good or bad.

To say that you are not what the world thinks, when it thinks well of you, is indeed good; for the world is a charlatan: it always says too much of every thing, whether well of it, or ill of it. I find no better remedy in contradictions than to take no notice of them, not to speak of them, and to observe a great meekness towards the person who causes them. What do we gain by opposing the winds and the waves, but to be covered with dust and foam?

I only wish for reputation inasmuch as it is necessary for the service of God; provided that God is served, what matters it about good or bad renown, the splendour or disrepute of one's character?

My God! what is this reputation to which so many persons sacrifice themselves, as to an idol? It is a dream, a shadow, an opinion, a smoke, a

praise whose memory perishes with the sound, an esteem which is often so false that many wonder at seeing themselves praised for virtues, knowing that they practise the opposite vices, and, on the other hand, blamed for vices which are not at all in them. Those who complain of lies are certainly delicate; these are a little cross of words which the air carries away. The saying, *he has stung me*, for *he has spoken ill of me*, displeases me; for there is much difference between the humming of a bee and its sting; a person must have an ear and a skin very tender indeed, if one cannot bear the tread of a fly, and the other is stung by its buzz.

We must take pleasure in being censured, because if we do not deserve it in one manner, we deserve it in another.

The life of good people is a mixture of sweetness and bitterness, and the hearts of the servants of God are like anvils, destined to be struck, and which live, nevertheless, by blows and outrages.

With the help of God, I shall never allow the maxim to depart from my mind, that *we must not live according to human prudence, but according to the laws of the Gospel*; for human prudence is genuine silliness. Oh, may God be pleased ever to defend us from it, and make us continually live according to the spirit of the Gospel, which is sweet, simple, and amiable, teaching us to return good for evil!

Those were far advanced in the prudence of the flesh who manufactured this proverb: "a good name is better than a strong boundary-wall," preferring reputation to riches, that is to say, vanity to avarice. O God! how far was that idea removed from the spirit of faith! Was there ever a reputation so to a

asunder as that of Jesus Christ? With what injuries was He not attacked? With what calumnies was He not assailed? Yet the Eternal Father gave Him a name above all names, and exalted Him so much the more as He had been humbled. And did not the Apostles depart joyful from the assemblies in which they had received affronts for the name of Jesus?

Oh, yes! it is a glory to suffer in so worthy a cause. I understand it well; we would only wish for illustrious persecutions, that our light might shine in the midst of darkness, and our vanity sparkle through our sufferings; we would desire to be gloriously crucified. But when the martyrs suffered so many cruel torments, were they praised by the spectators? On the contrary, were they not cursed, and abandoned to execration? Ah! there are few people who wish to make mere rubbish, as it were, of their reputation, in order to procure the glory of Him who died so ignominiously upon the cross, that He might conduct us to a glory which will never end! If the grace of God has placed any justice in me, I ought to desire that on the day of judgment, when the secrets of hearts will be manifested, there should be no one but God alone to know my justice, and that my injustices should be made known to all creatures.

Persecutions are pieces of the cross of Jesus Christ; we should scruple very much to allow the smallest particle of them to perish.

In what would we wish, I ask, to testify our love for Him who suffered so much for us, if not in contradictions, repugnances, and aversions? Ah! let our hearts be transpierced by the lance of opposition, let us eat the bread of bitterness, and drink the vinegar

of adversity, since our sweet Saviour wishes it to be so.

The Lord is the mirror of our soul, and the immovable pillar round which our desires revolve. This being so, let the heavens take up arms, let the earth and the elements break out in mutiny, let all creatures make war upon me, I confide in God; and to be in peace, it suffices me to know that I am with Him and He is with me.

Let us always have our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ crucified, let us walk in His service with confidence and simplicity, but wisely and discreetly; He will be the protector of our name, and if He permit it to be taken from us, He will restore us a better, or make us profit by the loss in holy humility, of which a single ounce is better than a ton of honour. If we be blamed unjustly, let us peaceably oppose truth to calumny; if the censure continue, let us persevere in our humility. Commending thus our reputation, with our soul, into the hands of God, we shall best secure it. Let us serve God through good and evil report, after the example of St. Paul, that we may be able to say: *O my God, for thee I have supported this opprobrium, for thee confusion has covered my face.*

A little virtue acquired in the midst of contradictions, reproaches, censures, and reprimands, is of much more value than a great deal acquired in another manner. Oh, how happy we are to have sworn an eternal fidelity to our Master! There is nothing required to please Him but to have patience, while living virtuously; for we shall meet with occasions enough of suffering.

Love Him well, my dear sister, in the retreats which you make to pray and to adore; love Him

when you receive Him in holy communion ; love Him when your heart is inundated with His holy consolations ; but, above all, love Him when you meet with trials, aridities, and tribulations ; for thus He loved you in paradise, but He testified more love in your regard amid the scourges, the nails, the thorns, and the darkness of Calvary.

You ought, in consideration of these things, to receive sweetly and patiently the *ennuis* that befall you, and bear them for the love of Him who only permits them for your good.

Lift up your heart then frequently to God, ask His assistance, and place your principal consolation in the happiness of belonging to Him. Every matter of annoyance will appear to you little, when you remember that you have so kind a friend, so great a support, so excellent a refuge.

THIRD BOOK:

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON SICKNESS AND DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

THE TIME OF SICKNESS.

WHEN sick, offer all your sorrows, your languors, and your pains to the Lord, and beg of Him to unite them with the torments which He endured for you. Obey the doctor; take medicine, food, and other remedies, for the love of God, remembering the gall which He took for the love of you; desire to be cured in order to serve Him; do not refuse to languish in order to obey Him; and dispose yourself to die, if He wishes it to be so, in order to praise and enjoy Him. Remember that bees, during the time in which they make honey, live on a very bitter kind of nourishment, and that in like manner we can never more properly elicit the great acts of meekness and patience, or better compose the honey of excellent virtues, than when we eat the bitter bread of tribulation and live in the midst of anguish. And as that honey which is made from the flowers of thyme, a small but bitter herb, is the best of all, so that virtue which is formed in the bitterness of pain and humiliation is the most

excellent of all. Tribulation and sickness are well calculated to advance us in virtue, on account of the many resignations which they oblige us to make into the hands of Our Lord.*

Your body is weak; but charity, which is the nuptial robe, covers it. A weak person excites all those who know him to a holy support, and gives them even a particular tenderness for him, provided he shows that he carries his cross lovingly and devoutly.

We must be equally free to take and ask for remedies, as sweet and courageous to support our illness. He who can preserve meekness in the midst of sorrows and sufferings, and peace in the midst of bustle and business, is almost perfect; and though there are few persons found, even in religion, who have attained to this degree of happiness, yet there are some, and there have been some in all times, and it is to this highest point we should aspire.

The life of a person in good health is almost entirely barren, and that of one in sickness may be a continual harvest: we must accommodate ourselves to necessity, and turn all to our eternal happiness. Ah! how little it matters if every thing dies in us, provided that God reigns and lives there! Evils often happen to us in order that, not having done much penance voluntarily for our sins, we may do some unavoidably. Let us, nevertheless, use suitable remedies,

* Sickness separates the Christian from the world and from all inebriation of the senses; it causes silence around him; it changes his body, which is the usual instrument of his illusions and vain desires, into an altar of sacrifice and expiation; the conversation of men is no longer sought for; every thing tells him to look inwards, and the Christian sufferer naturally finds himself alone with God.

but with such resignation that if the divine hand render them unavailing, we may acquiesce in its arrangement, and if it render them efficacious, we may bless it for its mercy. Oh! how little it were, though all the hours of our life were sad and full of affliction, provided that the hour of our death shall be happy and bring us true consolation! Ought we not wish as much to live on Mount Calvary as on Mount Thabor? It is good to be with Our Lord, wherever He is, on the cross as well as in glory. The hand of God is equally amiable, when it dispenses afflictions and when it distributes consolations. We must not say a word against the decrees of the celestial will, which disposes of its own in accordance with its greater glory. It is not in our power to retain the consolations which God bestows upon us, unless the one of loving Him above all things, which is a favour supremely desirable. O God! how good a thing it is to live only in God, to labour only in God, and to rejoice only in God!

It is on this account that we must have patience not only to be sick, but to have the sickness God wishes, in the place where He wishes, among the persons whom He wishes, and with the inconveniences He wishes, obeying the physician in each and every thing (except as regards ejaculatory prayers, which he cannot and should not prohibit, if they be not too frequent), taking medicines, meats, and other remedies, for the love of God, remembering the gall which Our Lord took for the love of us, desiring to be cured in order to serve Him, not refusing to suffer in order to obey Him, and disposing ourselves to die, if He should so will it, in order to praise and enjoy Him.

Lord Jesus! what true happiness has a soul dedicated to God, in being well exercised in tribulations, before quitting this life!

How can we know a sincere and fervent love, unless we see it in the midst of thorns and crosses, and particularly when it is left among them for a long time?

Thus our dear Saviour testified His immeasurable love, by the measure of His labours and His Passion.

Manifest your love for the spouse of your heart on the bed of sorrow; it was on the bed of sorrow that He formed your heart, even before it was formed in the world, beholding it as yet only in His divine designs.

Alas! Our Saviour counted all your sorrows, all your sufferings, and purchased, at the price of His blood, the patience and the love that were necessary for you, in order to worthily refer your pains to His glory and your own salvation.

Be consoled in the thought that God sends you these crosses; for nothing comes from His divine hand but what is for the benefit of souls that fear Him, either to purify them or to confirm them in His holy love.*

* "The remembrance which the saints in heaven have of their sufferings and humiliations, delights them; they celebrate them in their songs of gladness, and if they could have any regret, it would be that they had not suffered more. The saints who reign in heaven have taught these things to persons who are not there yet. Let us endeavour to remember this holy doctrine; it is understood *by the saints*.

"The great characteristic of sanctity is love of suffering, as its peculiar seal is spiritual joy; one produces the other.

Pains considered in themselves cannot be loved, but considered in their source, that is to say, in the divine will which appoints them, they are infinitely amiable. Behold the rod of Moses on the ground, it is a frightful serpent; see it in the hand of Moses, it is a wand of wonders. Behold tribulations in themselves, they are terrors; regard them in the will of God, they are delights.

You will be truly happy, if, with a heart filially loving, you receive that which Our Lord sends you from a heart paternally careful of your perfection.

Look often to the length of eternity, and you will not be troubled at the accidents of this mortal life.

If you have scarcely any gold or frankincense to offer to Our Lord, you have at least some myrrh, and I am sure He will accept it most willingly, for this fruit of life wished to be committed to the myrrh of bitterness, both at His birth and at His death.

Jesus glorified is beautiful; but although He is always infinitely good, He seems to be yet more beautiful, when crucified. Thus He wishes to be your spouse at present; in the future you will have Him glorified.

On what occasions can we make great acts of the union of our heart with the will of God, of the mor-

This is a mystery; but strive sincerely to enter into it, and you will find that I have reason for what I say.

“Let us not speak ill of the cross; it has been sent to us to warn us, to detach us from the earth, to conduct us to our end. Let us leave it only to cast ourselves into God. We have much need of suffering . . . let us suffer well!”—*P. De Ravignan.*

tification of our self-love, and of the love of our own abjection, if not on these?

God wishes thus to exercise our heart. It is not severity, it is clemency. Let not our will, but His most holy will, be done.

Let us have good courage, for, provided that our heart is faithful to Him, He will not load us above our strength, and He will carry our burden with us, when He sees that with a good affection we bow down our shoulders beneath it.

I desire your advancement in solid piety, and this advancement has its difficulties, given to train you in the school of the cross, in which alone our souls can be perfected.

Be assured that my heart expects the day of your consolation with as much ardour as your own; but wait, *wait*, I say, *while waiting*, to use the words of the Holy Scripture. Now, to wait while waiting means not to be disquieted while waiting; for there are many who, while waiting, do not wait, but are troubled and uneasy.

It is not with spiritual rose-bushes as with material ones; on the latter the thorns remain and the roses pass away, on the former the thorns pass away and the roses remain.

It is a great error to imagine that the services we render to God, without relish, without tenderness of heart, are little agreeable to Him, since, on the contrary, our actions are just like roses, which, while fresh, have more beauty; being, nevertheless, dry, they have more perfume and strength. In the very same manner, while our works performed with tenderness of heart are more agreeable to us, to us, I say, who desire only our own pleasure; yet, being

done in aridity, they have more excellence and merit before God.

For to love God in sugar, little children could nearly do as much; but to love Him in senna, that is the proof of a loving fidelity.

To say: Live Jesus on Thabor! St. Peter, rough as he was, had enough courage; but to say: Live Jesus on Calvary! that belonged only to the Mother, and the beloved disciple who was left to her as a child.

Oh! how blessed, my dear souls, will all those be who will not be scandalized at the opprobriums and ignominies of Our Lord, and who, during this life, will be crucified with Him, meditating on His Passion, carrying His mortification about with them, and not being ashamed to see that He was the scorn, the refuse, and the outcast of the world!*

Beyond a doubt, if we wish to be saved, we must attach ourselves to the cross of Our Saviour, meditate on it, and carry about His mortification in our bodies:

* "The same God sanctified both Thabor and Calvary, to make us understand the mysterious union that exists between ignominy and glory: they ought to be the same to us. We should remember that in consolation or in temptation, God is ever the same Being in our regard; He is always a Saviour, always great, always powerful, always turned towards us with infinite love. Let us then say on every occasion: God is always the same, this thought suffices for me, I wait for Him. . . . If Jesus shows His glory and splendour to His apostles, it is to lead them afterwards to the cross, it is to prepare them for sacrifice and immolation. In undertaking the labour of sanctification, we must always say: The joy of Thabor may be given sometimes on earth, but only for a very short and almost indiscernible time. Pain is what is regularly given us, to establish us in devotedness and zeal."—*P. De Ravignan.*

there is no other way to heaven; Our Lord passed by it first. As many ecstasies, elevations of soul, and raptures as you please; ascend, if you can, even to the third heaven with St. Paul; but still, if you do not remain on the cross of Our Lord and exercise yourself in mortification, I tell you that all the rest is vanity, and that you will remain void of every good, without virtue, and liable to be scandalized with the Jews at the Passion of our Divine Saviour. In fine, there is no other gate by which to enter into heaven than by that of humiliation and mortification.

CHAPTER II.

SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT IN SICKNESS.*

BUT, you say, you can scarcely fix your mind on the fatigues which Our Lord endured for you, so long as your sorrows press upon you. Very well! it is not necessary that you should do so, but only that, as frequently as you can, you should lift up your

* "When every thing in the world smiles on us, we easily attach ourselves to it: the enchantment is too powerful and the attraction too strong. If God loves us, be assured that He will not allow us to repose at our ease in this land of exile. He disturbs us in our vain amusements, He interrupts the course of our imaginary felicity, lest we should be carried away by the rivers of Babylon, that is to say, by the current of transitory pleasures. Believe, then, O children of the new alliance! that when God sends you afflictions, He wishes to break the bonds which attach you to the world and to recall you to your true country."—*Bossuet*.

heart to Our Saviour, making some acts like the following:—

1. Accepting this sorrow from His hand, as if you saw Him actually laying it upon your head.

2. Offering yourself to suffer still more.

3. Conjuring Him, by the merit of His torments, to accept these little inconveniences which you endure in union with the pains which he suffered on the cross.

4. Declaring that you wish not only to suffer, but to love and caress these evils, being sent from so good and so kind a father.

5. Invoking the martyrs and the many holy men and women who now enjoy heaven for having been afflicted on earth.

There are many persons who, when sick or afflicted in any manner whatever, take care not to complain, or to act delicately, because they think with reason that this would be a weakness and an immortification; yet at the same time they earnestly desire and act in such a manner that every one should pity them, that every one should compassionate their lot, that every one should look upon them as not only afflicted, but also patient and courageous. Now, I acknowledge there is patience in this, but it is a false patience, which, in fact, is no other thing than a most refined pretence and subtle vanity. *They have glory*, says the Apostle, *but not in the eyes of God*. The true patient does not complain of his sickness, or desire to be pitied; he speaks of it sincerely, truthfully, and simply, without bewailing himself, without being angry, without making his malady appear worse than it is. And if he is pitied, he suffers patiently to be pitied, unless that he is

pitied for something which he does not suffer; for then he modestly declares he does not suffer that, and remains thus peacefully between truth and patience, telling his sickness and not complaining of it.

There is no harm in desiring a remedy; on the contrary, we should carefully endeavour to procure it; for God, who sends you sickness, is also the author of remedies.

Nevertheless, you must employ those remedies with such resignation that if His Divine Majesty wishes the sickness to overcome them, you may acquiesce therein, and if He wishes the remedies to overcome the disease, you may bless Him.*

My God! how happy you are, if you continue thus under the hand of God, humbly, sweetly, and unaffectedly!

Ah! I hope that this pain in your head will much

* "As to the motives you may take for the preservation of your health, besides that of obedience, which delivers you from all self-seeking, you ought to consider your body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, who has made you its guardian, and that, as it is not your own, you must render an account of it to its Master. You ought to do the same for it, as if you were responsible for a chapel which was falling to ruin, and which you were obliged to repair. Moreover, your body is a member of Jesus Christ; be careful then of it, as if Our Lord would complain of the ill treatment He had received from you. Treat it, again, like that of a third person, to whom you would render a charity. And, in fine, remember that, as a child of God the Father, you belong to His family, and He wishes your body to be taken care of, and to be kept up. It belongs to Him, He has purchased it with the blood of His Son, He has a right over it, and He wishes us to preserve it, that we may employ it in His service."—*M. Olier.*

St. Catherine of Sienna seeing that her Saviour presented her with two crowns, one of gold, the other of thorns: "Oh, I wish for the crown of sorrow," said she, "in this world; the other will do for heaven!" I would desire to employ the crowning of Our Lord to obtain a crown of patience around my head-ache.

Live entirely among the thorns of the Saviour's crown, and say continually: Live Jesus! Our flesh is very delicate in not desiring anything unpleasant, but still the repugnances which you feel do not show a want of love. For, as I think, if we believed that by being flayed alive, He would love us more, we would have ourselves flayed alive, not indeed without repugnance, but in spite of repugnance.

Do not say that you would wish to recover your health in order the better to love and serve God; for, on the contrary, it would be only the better to serve your own contentment, which you would prefer to the contentment of God. The will of God is as good in sickness as it is in health, and is usually better. And if we love health better, let us not say it is the better to serve God; for who does not see that it is health we seek in the will of God, and not the will of God in health?

Poor and contemptible creatures that we are, we can hardly do anything good in this miserable life, except to endure some adversity. We seldom do God a service on one side, but we undo it on another. If by an action we desire to unite ourselves to Him, we often separate ourselves from Him by the evil circumstances which accompany it. On this account, it is good to quit him in sweetness to serve Him humbly in bitterness.

We must act with Our Lord by serving Him faithfully so long as health is good, and suffer with Him by patient endurance, when He sends us sorrows and afflictions.

Judge now, Theotime, whether you should regret the time you spend under the pressure of suffering, since in each one of those moments you may earn an eternal crown. How many crowns in an hour! how many in a day! how many in a year! Oh, what treasures! what glory for heaven! "I would prefer one of those days," says a holy religious, "to all the exploits of conquerors." When we think on eternity, where there will be nothing more to suffer, where we can give nothing more to God, and where God will have nothing more to do but to load us with His gifts, all the miseries of this life appear infinitely amiable, and there is not a moment which ought not to be a moment of the cross or of humiliation. How precious then is the time of this life, and how holy is its use, when joined with pain and bitterness!

The heart united to the heart of God cannot refrain from loving Him, or from accepting willingly the arrows which the hand of God shoots at it. St. Blandina found no greater relief amid the wounds of her martyrdom than the sacred thought which she expressed in these few words: *I am a Christian*. Blessed is the heart that knows how to breathe this sigh!

The only cure for the most of our maladies and infirmities, whether corporal or spiritual, is patience and conformity to the divine will, resigning ourselves to the good-pleasure of God, without reserve or exception, in health, in sickness, in contempt, in honour, in consolation, in desolation, in time, and in eternity; willingly accepting pains of mind and body from

His most amiable hand, as if we saw it present; offering ourselves to endure even more, should it appear good to Him. No one can tell how pure and meritorious such an acceptance of the will of God renders our sufferings, when, with meekness, patience, and love, we receive the afflictions which we must endure, in consideration of the eternity during which God has willed them, and because they are now conformable to His providence. As soon as the divine good-pleasure appears, we should immediately range ourselves on its side.

You are aware that the fire which Moses saw in the desert was a figure of holy love, and that, as its flames were nourished in the midst of thorns, so the exercises of sacred love are performed much better in the midst of tribulation than in the midst of comfort.*

You have then good reason to know that Our Lord desires you to profit by His love, since He

* "What can the soldier hope for, whose captain disdains to prove him? But, on the other hand, if the soldier is exercised in a variety of laborious undertakings, he has reason to expect promotion. O delicate piety, which never tasted afflictions, piety nurtured in the shade and in repose! I hear thee discourse of the future life; thou pretendest to the crown of immortality, but thou shouldst not reverse the order of the Apostle: "Patience produces trial, and trial, hope." If thou expectest the glory of God, come, that I may put thee to the test which God has proposed for His servants. Here is a disaster, a loss of goods, a contradiction, a sickness; what! thou beginnest to murmur, O poor disconcerted piety! thou canst not endure it, O piety without strength or foundation! Ah, thou didst never deserve the name of Christian piety, thou wast only a vain phantom; thou didst glitter like gold in the sun, but thou couldst not bear the fire of the crucible; thou mayest deceive men by a false appearance, but thou art not worthy of God, or of the purity of the future kingdom."—*Bossuet.*

sends you such health as is always uncertain, and many other trials. My God! how sweet a thing it is to see Our Lord crowned with thorns on the cross and with glory in heaven! For this encourages us to receive contradictions lovingly, knowing well that by the crown of thorns we shall arrive at the crown of felicity. Keep yourself ever closely attached to Our Lord, and you will meet with no evil that will not be converted into good.

Often look with the interior eyes of your soul on Jesus Christ crucified, naked, blasphemed, calumniated, abandoned, overwhelmed with every kind of weariness, disgust, and sadness; and consider that all your sorrows are not at all comparable to His, either in kind or in degree, and that you will never suffer anything approaching to that which He has suffered for you.

Consider the pains which the martyrs endured formerly, and those which so many persons endure even at this day, greater beyond all proportion than any which afflict you, and say: "Alas! my labours are consolations, and my pains are roses, if I compare myself with those who, without resource, without sympathy, without any alleviation, live in a continual death, overwhelmed with afflictions, a thousand times greater than mine."

We do not think of death; and you, being in health, are obliged to think no longer of life. We avoid the cross of Jesus Christ; and He Himself nails you to it. We do not wish to feel the efficacy of sufferings, for we desire to be virtuous without patience; and Our Lord, who loves you more than you can love yourself, applies Himself till He is tired to purify you, while perhaps He leaves others to themselves.

Oh, how happy you are to have something to suffer for Our Lord, who, having founded the Church militant and triumphant on the cross, always favours those who carry the cross! Since you cannot remain very long in this world, it is well that the little time you do spend in it should be employed in suffering.

If I had anything to desire, it would be that my death should be preceded by a long illness; for, by this means, the affection of my friends would relent, and they would no longer have so much care of visiting me. The diligence, in like manner, of my servants would gradually diminish, and every one would receive comfort by my death.

CHAPTER III.

PRAYERS SUITABLE TO THE SICK.*

THE bed of the sick is an altar of sacrifice. . . Happy is the just man who disturbs not the sacrifice

* "Be not troubled about the indisposition which the will of God has allowed to come upon me. It is a special order of His goodness and His providence, for which we ought to thank Him. There are many things in me to be purified, and sickness is the best means for doing so; He has usually treated me after this manner, of His infinite goodness. May He be for ever praised! I cannot in my infirmities apply myself to prayer so assiduously as I thought to do when retiring from the din of the city; but the sacrifice of our body, of our mind, of our time, and of all that we have, must serve as a substitute. The ill use I have made of my health is the cause of my infirmities; but may God be pleased of His goodness to satisfy Himself in us as He desires, and to content Himself, should it so please Him, in our destruction and in our consummation! All these evils are only shadows in comparison with what our sins deserve. What mercy and goodness of God, to make us perform so sweet a penance!

by his murmurs and his cries, who adores the beneficent hand that is hidden under the instruments which it vouchsafes to employ, who blesses the salutary strokes, who feels the honour of the distinction! How brilliant will his soul depart from the crucible of tribulations! It is as gold tried seven times, it is marked with the seal of the elect, it bears the impress of Jesus Christ.

It is not good to require Mass in bed-rooms; from your bed adore Our Lord on the altar, and be content. Daniel, being unable to go to the temple, turned towards it; do you the same. But I am of opinion that you should communicate every Sunday and great feast on your bed, so long as the doctor permits it. Our Lord will willingly visit you on the bed of affliction.

My dear daughter, if you cannot make long prayers during your infirmities, and during the infirmities of your husband, make your infirmity itself a prayer, by offering it to Him who so much loved our infirmities, that on the day of His espousals and of the joy of His heart, as the inspired lover terms it, He was crowned with them and gloried in them.

Aspire often to God by short but burning elevations

Far from complaining, let us adore Our Saviour's love, which treats us with so much clemency, and which deigns, as St. Paul says, to complete that which was wanting to His sufferings. It seems to me an incomparable honour Our Lord does us, in using our bodies to suffer again in them for the glory of His Father. Let us, then, with the Apostle, glory in our infirmities, that the divine power may dwell in us; pay great attention to the sentiments which Our Lord will give you during the holy time of your infirmity; for it is the ordinary method of God to accomplish in sickness that which, if we may so speak, He could not well accomplish in health. Above all, abandon yourself entirely to Him, to do what He wishes with you, resigning yourself as a victim to suffer every thing, and even the death which your sins deserve."—*M. Olivier.*

of the heart; admire His beauty, invoke His aid, adore His goodness, give Him your soul a thousand times a-day, fix your eyes interiorly on His abode, and stretch out your hand to Him, as a little child towards its father, that He may conduct you.

This exercise is not difficult, for it may be intertwined with all our affairs and occupations, without encumbering or delaying them. The traveller who takes a little wine to cheer his heart, though he stops a short while on the way, does not interrupt his journey, but rather acquires new strength to accomplish it more quickly, only waiting to advance the better.

When did Our Lord render most glory to God, if not when, laid upon the cross, His hands and feet were pierced? This was the greatest act of His service. And what use did He make of those moments? To suffer, to offer; His sufferings were an oblation, an odour of sweetness, to His Father. While you are sick, you must lay aside a regular meditation; but to endure the scourges of Our Lord is no less a good than to meditate; no, indeed, but it is rather better to be on the cross with Jesus Christ than merely to contemplate Him in prayer.*

Manage yourself very cautiously, so long as your

* "When some sickness or engagement prevents us from making prayer, we must hope that an hour of suffering will be as agreeable in the eyes of God as an hour of prayer, during which we might, perhaps, seek to gratify ourselves. When we imagine that the multiplicity and perplexity of our exterior occupations hinder us from spending some time with God, or thinking often of Him, let us remember that it is not the repose of nature, but that of grace which is necessary for the soul in order to attend to God; this repose is found in the cross, in pain, in the love of contempt, better than anywhere else."—*The Interior Christian*.

present infirmity continues; be not at all uneasy to force yourself to any kind of exercise, unless gently. If you be tired on your knees, sit up. If you have not attention to pray for half an hour, pray for a quarter, or for only half a quarter. I beg of you to place yourself in the presence of God, and to suffer your sorrows before Him.

As for meditation, the doctors have reason: while you are so unwell, you must give it up, but to supply its place, you must double your ejaculatory prayers, and refer every thing to God by a simple acquiescence in His good-pleasure, which will not by any means separate you from Him, while preventing you from meditation, but will unite you more closely to Him by the exercise of a holy and tranquil resignation.*

What matters it how we belong to God, in one manner or in another? Truly, since we seek Him alone, and since we find Him no less in mortification

* "Your life has been entirely consecrated to piety by exercises which are, as it were, the food of your soul; but a sickness breaks the chain of pious practices you had imposed on yourself. Already, you can no longer assist at Mass, even on Sunday; you are deprived of the sacred banquet of communion; very soon, your state of weakness will prohibit you from prayer. Pious soul! do not complain; you are called to the honour of nourishing your soul by participating with Jesus Christ *in a meat of which, perhaps, you did not know*, but the use of which will make your sickness a powerful means of sanctification. *My meat*, He said to His disciples, *is to do the will of Him who sent me*. This is the meat that is presented to you, and by it alone can we live to eternal life. Prayer itself is inefficacious, if not vivified by this salutary nourishment, according to the words of Our Saviour in the Holy Gospel: *Not they who say to me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father shall enter into it.—Providence.*

than in prayer, especially when He touches us with sickness, one mode ought to be as good to us as another; besides, the ejaculations and aspirations of our soul are true and continual prayers, and the suffering of evil is the most worthy offering that we can make to Him who has saved us by suffering. Read a good book from time to time, for it also supplies the place of meditation.*

Disquiet not yourself about being unable to serve God according to your taste; for, by accommodating yourself well to inconveniences, you will serve Him according to His taste, which is better than yours. May He be for ever praised and glorified!†

When God will have restored your health, you must resume your prayer, at least for half an hour in the morning, and a quarter of an hour in the

* *The Treatise on Conformity to the Will of God*, by Rodriguez; the *Comforter of the Sick*, by P. Lambilotte: the *Sufferings of Christ*, by Father Thomas.

† "You are aware that it is God who has reduced you to your present state; it is He then who dispenses you from your practices of piety, or rather who forbids them to you. Hence, be not uneasy, but remember He expects from you in exchange that you will exercise yourself more assiduously in doing His will by renouncing your own, and that it is in order that you may make this exercise your principal nourishment, the means of doing so are so frequently provided for you. Indeed, what contradictions, what reverses, what sacrifices does not sickness entail! Projects disarranged, expenses to be incurred, remedies against which you revolt, awkwardness and negligence on the part of those who have care of you, in fine, a multitude of little things that annoy you! How many occasions of saying: God wishes it to be so. . . . What ought to be your study, then, not to allow a single occasion of this kind to escape, and thus you will deserve to be placed in the rank of those whom Jesus holds most dear; *for whosoever, He says, does the will of God, he is my brother, my sister, my mother.*"—*Divine Providence.*

evening before supper ; for, when once Our Lord has given you a relish for this heavenly honey, it would be a great reproach in you to disrelish it. You must then take courage, and not allow conversation to deprive you of so rich a treat as is that of speaking heart to heart with your God.

Do not refrain when you desire to complain ; but I would wish this to be done to God with a filial spirit, as a tender child does to its mother ; for, provided it be done lovingly, there is no danger in complaining, or in asking a cure, or in changing place, or in being comforted ; only do it with love and resignation into the arms of the most holy will of God. It is foolish to imagine that you do not make acts of virtue well ; for, as I told you before, they do not cease to be exceedingly good, though performed languidly, heavily, and as if by force. You cannot give God any thing but what you have, and, at this season of affliction, you have no other kind of acts.

I suspect that the melancholy humour takes occasion from your indisposition to sadden you a good deal, and, seeing yourself sad, you are disquieted ; but do not be uneasy, I beg of you. If you find yourself sluggish, fretful, gloomy, yet do not fail to remain in peace, and though it seems to you that every thing you do is done without relish, without sentiment, without energy, still cease not to embrace your crucified Lord, and to give Him your heart, and to consecrate to Him your spirit with its affections, such as they are, and languishing though they be. The Blessed Angela of Foligno said that Our Lord had revealed to her that there is no kind of good so agreeable to Him as that which is done per force, meaning that which a will firmly resolved accomplishes in spite of the weariness of the flesh,

against the repugnances of the inferior part of the soul, and in opposition to aridity, sadness, and interior desolation. My God! my dear daughter, how happy you shall be if you continue faithful to your resolutions, in the midst of crosses, to Him who has loved you so faithfully unto death, and even the death of the cross!

It is a manifest truth that our souls generally contract in the inferior part the qualities and dispositions of our bodies; and I say in the inferior part, because it is that which is immediately connected with the body, and subject to share in the disorders of the body. A delicate body overpowered by the burden of sickness, grieved by many sorrows, cannot permit the heart to be so lively, so active, so prompt in its operations, as in health; but all this does not at all interfere with the acts of the soul in the superior part, which are as agreeable to God as if they were made in the midst of the most joyous gaieties of the world, yea, and more agreeable, being made with more pain and difficulty; but they are not so agreeable to the person who makes them, because, not entering into the inferior part of the soul, they are not so delectable according to our ideas.

We must not be unjust, nor require from ourselves that which is not in us. When we are inconvenienced in regard to health, we must only require from our spirit some acts of submission, acts of holy union with the good-pleasure of God, which are formed in the summit of the soul; and as to exterior actions, we must do the best we can, and content ourselves with performing them, though reluctantly, languidly, and heavily. And to improve the languor, heaviness, and dulness of our heart, making them serviceable to divine love, we must embrace a holy abjection; thus

will you change the plummet of your heaviness into gold, and a gold finer than that of the rarest pleasures of the worldly heart. Have patience then with yourself; that the superior part may balance the ponderousness of the inferior part.

Your *Beloved* is a *bouquet of myrrh*; cease not to press this bouquet to your bosom: *My Beloved to me, and I to him*; He will always be in my heart. Isaias calls Him *the man of sorrows*. Torment not yourself to do much, but dispose yourself to suffer with love that which you suffer. God will be propitious to you. Whether languishing, or living, or dying, *we are the Lord's, and nothing shall separate us from his holy love*, through the help of His grace. Never will our heart have life but in Him and for Him. He shall be for ever the God of our heart.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOOK OF THE AFFLICTED.

It is the truth, that nothing in this world can help us to a more profound tranquillity than often to look upon Our Lord in the midst of the afflictions which befell Him from His birth until His death; for we shall see there so much poverty, contempt, abjection, calumny, pain, and torment, that we shall be ashamed to call afflictions those little contradictions which we meet with, or to require patience for such trifles, when one single drop of modesty would suffice to make us endure them all well.

A heart that greatly esteems and loves Jesus Christ crucified, loves His death, His pains, His torments, His blows, His opprobriums, His hunger, His thirst,

More Free Items at www.catholicdom.com

His ignominies; and when it happens to meet with some little participation in them, it thrills with joy, and lovingly embraces them.

I will not tell you not to pay any regard to your afflictions, for your tongue, which is usually prompt at a reply, would inform me that they make themselves to be regarded by the bitterness of the anguish which they produce; but I will rather tell you not to regard them unless in contrast with the cross, for then you will find them either little, or so agreeable that you will prefer to suffer them than to enjoy any consolation separated from them.

The mountain of Calvary is the school of love. There faithful souls discover in the wounds of the lion of the tribe of Juda the honey of love; and in heaven, after the motive of the divine goodness, considered in itself, that of the death of the Saviour will be the most powerful to ravish all the blessed with love. The sacred Passion of Our Lord should be the well-spring and fountain of all our love. The other day, as I was in prayer, considering the open side of Our Lord, and seeing His heart, I fancied that our hearts were there too, all around His, doing it homage as the sovereign King of hearts.

The crucifix is the true book of the Christian. I appeal to you all, O illustrious doctors of the Church! Whence, O devout St. Bernard, did you draw your sweet doctrine, unless from this book? And you, O pious Augustine, *who didst nourish your soul in the wounds of the Saviour?* And you, O seraphic Francis of Assissi, who extracted from *the book of the cross* so many touching instructions? And you, angelic St. Thomas, who wrote nothing until you had first taken counsel with Jesus crucified? And you, seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure, who seem in

writing your pious little books to have had no other paper than the cross, no other pen than the lance, no other ink than the blood of Our Saviour Jesus Christ? Oh! what a fire consumed you, when your heart sent forth this cry of love: "How good it is to be with Jesus crucified! I will make three tabernacles here: one in His hands, another in His feet, and a third in the wounds of His side, where I may watch and repose, read and speak, pray and do every thing."*

Oh, if Our Lord loved us even to the death of the cross, what remains for us to do but to die of love for Him, or, if we cannot die for Him, at least live only to serve Him? Certainly, if we do not love Him, if we do not live for Him, we are ungrateful and perfidious. "O Lord," said St. Augustine, "is it possible that man can know that Thou hast died for him, and that he will not live for Thee?" "What! my God," said the bleeding St. Francis of Assissi, "Thou hast died of love for us, and no one loves Thee!"

* St. Bernard studied this great book, I mean the cross of Jesus, with incredible pleasure; he refreshed himself with his Saviour's blood, and with this divine liquor drank in a supreme contempt for the world. "I come," he says, "O good Master, I come to be crucified with Thee. I see that those sweet eyes whose glance cast St. Peter into tears, no longer yield any light; I will close mine for ever to the vanity of the world. This divine mouth, from which flowed rivers of living water springing up to eternal life, is shut by death; I will condemn mine to silence, opening it only to confess my sins to Thy mercy. My heart shall be as ice to foolish pleasures, and as I cannot see a single portion of Thy body sound, I wish to carry on every side of me the marks of Thy sufferings, that I may one day be clothed with Thy glorious resurrection."

St. Paul, the incomparable master, the great doctor of the infant Church, made Jesus Christ on the cross the delightful object of his love, the sweet subject of his discourses, the end of all his aspirations in this world, and the foundation of all his hopes in eternity. "I have judged myself," he says, "to know nothing but my Jesus crucified; God forbid that I should ever glory in any other thing than in the cross of my Jesus, and think not that I have any other life than that of the cross; for I assure you that I so feel and behold everywhere the cross of my Saviour, that by His grace I am altogether crucified to the world, and the world is entirely crucified to me." Blessed is the soul which thus every where finds Jesus Christ crucified!

It will be useful always to carry the crucifix about with us, to kiss it often with love, to look upon it with respect and tenderness, saying at times:—

O Jesus, the beloved of my heart, permit me to press Thee to my breast as a bundle of myrrh; I promise that my mouth, which is so happy as to kiss Thy holy cross, shall abstain from deceits, from murmurs, from every word that might displease Thee; that my eyes, which behold Thy tears and blood flowing for my sins, shall look no more upon the vanities of the world, or any thing that might expose me to offend Thee; that my ears, which hear with so much consolation the seven words pronounced on the cross, shall take no more pleasure in empty praise, in useless conversation, in words that wound the neighbour; that my mind, after having studied with so much relish the mystery of the cross, shall be closed against all vain or evil thoughts and imaginations; that my will, submissive to the laws of the cross and to the love of Jesus crucified, shall

have only charity towards my brethren; that, in fine, nothing shall enter into or depart from my heart, without the permission of this holy cross, the sacred sign of which I trace upon myself at rising and at going to rest, and in all the sorrows of life.*

You ought then every day, not only in prayer, but even while walking, take a view of Our Lord enduring the pains of our redemption, and consider what a happiness it will be for you to participate in them. Examine on what occasions the like may happen to you, such as contradictions to your desires, even those desires which appear to you most just and legitimate; and then, with a great love for the cross and Passion of Our Lord, cry out with St. Andrew: "O good cross! so much loved by my Saviour, when will you receive me into your arms?"

What a grace, to be not only under the cross, but on the cross, and at least a little crucified with Our Lord! Have good courage, make a virtue of necessity, and lose not an opportunity of showing your love for God in the midst of tribulation, as He in the midst of thorns has shown His for you.

Remain in peace in the paternal arms of the most loving care which God has of you, and will have of you, since you belong to Him, and are no longer your own. Oh, how great a favour it is, when He reserves His consolations for the life to come!

The present life is such that in it we must use the bread of bitterness more than honey; but that life for which we have resolved to cherish holy patience will abundantly repay us in due season. *Beware*, says the Apostle, *of losing confidence, by which being*

* "Behold my book!" said the angelic Pius VII., showing his crucifix, when Napoleon asked him what he read during the long hours of his sorrowful captivity.

*fortified, you shall valiantly support the combat of afflictions, however great they may be.**

When the wind blows in our valleys, between the lofty mountains, it bends the little flowers and tears up the great trees. So I, who dwell a little high up in the office of bishop, am exposed to more inconveniences. . . . But at the foot of the sacred cross of Our Lord, the rain which falls on all sides abates the wind. When I am there, O God, how much my heart is at peace, and what sweetness proceeds from that vermilion dew! Let us then remain always in the pierced side of Our Saviour . . . How good is the Lord! How amiable is His heart! Let us remain in this holy asylum, let this heart ever live in our hearts, and let this blood ever bound through the veins of our souls.

Place your head at the foot of the cross, and keep it there humbly and full of confidence, to receive the merits of the precious blood which will flow down upon it.

CHAPTER V.

THE SICK WHO CANNOT PRAY.

All things have their time. There is a time to suffer, and a time to pray. It is not during spring or winter we seek for fruit on trees. We should have flesh of

* The cross is engraven everywhere; the things of this world carry its impress, and God has arranged matters so that we may be always prepared to receive it.

We must not reject the cross when it appears, and it will always appear; we shall always suffer. Does not our own experience prove the immense need we have of suffering? If by an impossibility, a soul were exempt from suffering, where

iron, to act in suffering or to suffer in acting. When God calls us to suffer, He does not require us to act.

There are some sick persons who, seeing themselves stretched on a bed of pain, complain, not so much indeed of their sorrows as of their inability to render Our Lord the services they were accustomed to render Him in health. In acting thus, they greatly deceive themselves, for one hour of suffering through love and submission to the will of God, is worth more than many days of labour with less love.

But now for the truth: we always wish to serve God in our own way, not in His; according to our own will, not according to His; and we love His will when it is conformable to ours, instead of loving ours only when and inasmuch as it is conformable to His.

When He wishes us to be sick, we wish to be well. When He desires us to serve Him by suffering, we desire to serve Him by action. When He wishes us to practise patience, we wish to practise humility, devotion, prayer, or some other virtue, not because it is more to His liking, but more to ours. We love virtue when accompanied with sweet sauce, not when accompanied with vinegar and gall. Calvary does not agree so well with us as Thabor; it is not on the former mountain, but on the latter, we would wish to build our tabernacles.

In a word, we prefer health to sickness, and we do not love God the same in health and in sickness. We love Him better when He caresses us than when He strikes us, and thus we change, and, instead of

would be its virtue? where would be its sanctity? We shall be able to suffer when we understand that suffering is the work of God, and the means chosen by God to lead us to Him.

loving the love of God, we love the sweetness of His love; for he who loves only God, loves Him equally at all times, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, in suffering and in joy. God being always the same, the variation of our love towards Him cannot but proceed from something out of Him.

CHAPTER VI.

ADVICE TO CONVALESCENTS.

WHILE our bodies are in pain, it is difficult to elevate our hearts to the perfect consideration of the goodness of Our Lord; so great a perfection belongs only to those who, from long habit, have their minds entirely turned towards heaven. But we, who are yet too tender, have souls that are easily turned aside by the thought of labours and bodily fatigues. On which account, it is no wonder if, during your sickness, you omit the exercise of mental prayer, as, at that time, it is sufficient to employ ejaculatory prayers and pious aspirations; and, since the sickness makes us often sigh, it costs us nothing more to sigh in God, to God, and for God, than to sigh in useless complaints.

But now that God has restored your health, it is necessary, my dear daughter, to resume your prayer, at least for half an hour in the morning and a quarter of an hour in the evening before supper; for, since Our Lord has once given you a relish for this heavenly honey, it would be a great reproach in you to disrelish it, and especially since He made you enjoy it with so much facility and consolation, as I very well remember you told me He did. We must then have courage, and not allow any thing to deprive

us of so rich a treat as is that of conversing heart to heart with God.

CHAPTER VII.

NEITHER TO DESIRE NOR TO REFUSE COMFORT IN SICKNESS.

OUR Lord, when on the cross, showed us how to mortify those sentiments of nature which make us too tender about ourselves; for, being very thirsty, He did not ask a drink, but only manifested His want, saying: "I thirst." After that He made an act of the greatest submission; for one of those present offering Him a sponge steeped in vinegar on the end of a lance, He tasted it with His blessed lips.

A strange thing! He was not ignorant that such a beverage would increase His anguish; nevertheless, He took it without a word, to teach us with what submission we should receive what is presented to us in sickness, without manifesting our repugnance or our disgust.

Alas! if we are much or little inconvenienced, far from imitating our sweet Master, we never cease to lament and complain: our sickness, whatever it is, is extraordinary, and that which others suffer is nothing in comparison with it; we are more vexed and impatient than can be described; and we can find nothing to relieve us soon enough. Truly it is a great pity to see how little we imitate the patience of Our Saviour, who, forgetting His sorrows, did not endeavour to have them observed, but was content, that His heavenly Father, by whose order He

suffered them, considered them and would pour out their fruit on mankind, for whom they were endured.

It is true indeed that humility, patience, and the love of Him who sends us crosses, require that we should receive them without complaint; but, see, my dearest daughter, there is a difference between telling one's affliction and complaining of it. We can tell it: on many occasions we are obliged to tell it, as we are obliged to remedy it; but this ought to be done peacefully, without increasing it by exaggerations or lamentations.

This is what St. Teresa says; for it is not to complain, to tell one's sickness; but to tell it with sighs, with groans, with many evidences of sorrow, is reprehensible. Tell it then simply and truthfully, without scruple; in such a manner, that you may not seem unwilling to be sweetly resigned to it, as you ought to be.

Engrave then on your memory these two precious maxims, which I have already so often recommended to you: Desire nothing, refuse nothing. Look upon the little Jesus in the crib; He receives poverty, nakedness, the society of beasts, the inclemency of the weather, and all that His Father permits to happen to Him. It is not written that He ever reached out His hands to be lifted up into the bosom of His Mother. He abandoned Himself entirely to her care and her foresight. He did not refuse the little comforts she gave Him, and received the services of St. Joseph, the adorations and presents of the shepherds and the kings, all with a holy equanimity. We ought to act in like manner, and, after the example of Our Divine Saviour, neither ask any thing nor refuse any thing, but be equally willing to

suffer and to receive whatever the Providence of God may permit to befall us. May God grant us the grace to do so!

CHAPTER VIII.

PATIENCE IN SICKNESS.

I FIND in the Gospel a perfect model of this virtue in the person of St. Peter's mother-in-law. This good woman, attacked by a heavy fever, remained tranquil and peaceful, without any uneasiness herself, and without causing any to those around her. She was content to suffer her malady in patience and in meekness. O God! how happy she was, and how well she deserved to be taken care of, for the apostles obtained her cure without being solicited by her, impelled only by a motive of charity and compassion to relieve her.

This dear patient knew well that Our Lord was at Capharnaum, and that He cured the sick; nevertheless, she was not anxious to send a messenger to tell Him of what she suffered. But what is still more admirable is, that she saw Him in her house, where He looked upon her, and she also looked upon Him; and yet she did not say a single word to excite Him to compassion, nor did she put herself in the way of touching Him in order to be cured.

Still more, she did not appear to make any account of her malady, she was not affected in describing it, she did not complain of it, she did not ask any one to pity her or to obtain her cure. She was content that God, and those who governed her, knew it. She regarded Our Lord not only as her sovereign physician, but also as her God, to whom she belonged

equally in health and in sickness, being as content in sickness as in health.

Oh, how many persons would have had the cleverness to try to get cured by Our Lord, and would have said that they asked health only the better to serve Him, fearing lest any thing should be wanting to Him! But this holy woman did not think of that, showing her resignation, and asking nothing of Our Lord, but His most holy will.

Yet I do not mean to say that we cannot make a petition to Our Lord, with this condition: "if such be His will." It is not sufficient to be sick because God wishes it, but we must also be content to suffer it as He wishes, when He wishes, during the time He wishes, and in the manner He wishes, making no choice or refusal of any malady, however abject or humiliating it may be; for sickness without abjection often inflates the heart instead of humbling it. But when accompanied with confusion, what an opportunity of practising patience, humility, and meekness of spirit and of heart!

Let us then have a great care, after the example of this holy woman, to keep our heart in meekness, turning our maladies to advantage as she did; for, being cured, she arose immediately and served Our Lord, using her health only for His good-pleasure. In this generous forgetfulness of self, she did not imitate those persons of the world, who, having been sick for a few days, take weeks and months to recover.

As to the afflictions of your heart, you can easily discern those for which there is a remedy from those for which there is none. Where there is a remedy, you should endeavour peacefully and sweetly to procure it; and where there is not, you should endure

the affliction as a mortification which Our Lord sends upon you, in order to exercise you, and make you entirely His own.

Beware of yielding to complaints; rather oblige your heart to suffer tranquilly; and if it happen to make some sally of impatience, restore it to peace and meekness. Believe me, God loves the souls that are agitated by the waves and tempests of this world, provided they receive their tribulations from His hands, and, like valiant warriors, endeavour to maintain their fidelity amid a thousand dangers.

I should not wonder if, henceforward, age and the nature of your constitution, would often cause you to be delicate; and, therefore, I advise you to exercise yourself much in the love of the most amiable will of God, in the renunciation of exterior comforts, and in sweetness in the midst of bitterness; you cannot make a more excellent sacrifice. Hold fast to it, and practise not only a solid love, but a tender, sweet, and gentle love towards those around you: I say this from the experience I have had, that infirmities, though never depriving us of charity, take away, nevertheless, a spirit of gentleness towards the neighbour, unless we are greatly on our guard against them.

CHAPTER IX.

PATIENCE IN OPERATIONS.

MAY Our Lord be pleased to give us His Holy Spirit, to do and suffer all things according to His holy will!

I come to your sore leg, and find that it must be opened; this cannot be done without extreme pain.

More Free Items at www.catholicdom.com

But, my God! what an occasion of trial has His goodness given us in this necessity! Oh! courage, we belong to Jesus Christ; behold how He clothes us with His livery. Imagine that the instrument to open your leg is one of those nails that pierced the feet of Our Lord.

Oh, what a happiness! He chose favours of this kind for Himself, and so much cherished them that He has borne marks of them into paradise, and now He sends you a share of them. But you will tell me that you cannot serve God while you lie in bed; and I reply: "When did Our Lord render the greatest service to His Father?" Undoubtedly when He was laid upon the bed of the cross, having His hands and feet pierced. This was the greatest act of His service.

Behold, your cross has come to you; embrace and caress it for the love of Him who sends it to you. The afflicted David said to God: *I am dumb, and I open not my mouth, because thou hast done it; as if he should say: If any one else, O my God, had sent me this affliction, I would not like it, I would resent it; but since thou hast sent it, I say not a word, I accept it, I receive it, I honour it.**

* The glorious martyr, St. Gordius, said to his executioners, in order to excite and stimulate their sloth: "Tear my body, cut it into little morsels, make me suffer everything you wish, grudge me not the hope of beatitude: the more you crush my body under blows, the more you increase my recompense." The sorrows we endure for the love of God are like contracts that we make with Him. For wounds and bruises, He obliges Himself to clothe us with a shining robe; for affronts, He will give us a crown of glory; for a prison, the vast empire of heaven; for the wicked sentence passed against our innocence, we shall hear the praises and benedictions of angels and saints.

We are in this world only to receive and to carry the sweet Jesus: on our tongue, by announcing Him, on our arms by doing good works, on our shoulders by bearing His yoke, His aridities, and His trials; and as well in our interior senses are we to carry Him, as in our exterior ones. Oh, how blessed are they who carry Him lovingly and constantly!

But here is a precious balm to sweeten your sorrows. Every day take a drop or two of the blood which distils from the wounds in the feet of Our Lord, and receive it into your soul by meditation; with your imagination, also, dip your finger reverently in this liquor, and apply it to your affliction, invoking the sweet name of Jesus: and you will find that your grief will diminish.

The obedience which you render the doctor will be exceedingly agreeable to God, and will be put to your credit on the day of judgment.

Whilst confined to your bed, I bear you a particular respect, and a more than ordinary esteem, as a person visited by God, clothed in His habit, and His special spouse.

When Our Lord was on the cross, He was declared king, even by His enemies; and souls that are on the cross are declared queens.

St. Paul, who had been in heaven, and in the midst of the felicities of paradise, regarded himself as happy only in his infirmities, and on the cross of Our Lord.

When your leg is lanced, say with the same apostle: *Let no one any more annoy or trouble me; for I carry the marks and signs of my Saviour in my body.*

O fortunate limb, which, being well turned to account, will carry you farther into heaven than if it were the soundest in the world!

Paradise is a mountain towards which we walk better with bruised and broken legs, than with legs sound and entire.

CHAPTER X.

PERSEVERANCE IN PATIENCE.

In your patience, says the Son of God, *you shall possess your souls*. It is then the effect of patience to possess one's soul well, and in proportion as patience is greater, the possession of the soul will be fuller and more excellent; besides, patience is so much the more perfect as it is the less blended with fretfulness and anxiety. From these two last inconveniences may God be pleased to deliver you, and very soon after you will be quite at peace!

Good courage, I beg of you. You have only suffered the hardship of the way for three years, and you would wish for repose; but remember two things: one, the children of Israel were forty years in the desert before arriving in the land of rest, which had been promised to them, though six weeks would have sufficed for the journey at their ease, and it was not lawful for them to inquire why God obliged them to make so many windings, and to pass through such rough trials, while all those who murmured died on the way; the other, Moses, the greatest friend of God in the whole multitude, died on the frontiers of the promised land, seeing it with his eyes, and being unable to enjoy it.

May God help us to regard little the nature of the way that we tread, but to keep our eyes fixed on Him who leads us, and on the blessed country to which He leads us! What matter, whether we pass through deserts or through fields, provided God is with us, and we go to heaven. I beg of you to elude the remembrance of your malady as much as you can, and though you feel it, you need not consider or look upon it; for the sight of it will give you more apprehension than the thought of it would give you grief. Thus we bandage the eyes of those on whom the sword or the lance has to be used. It seems to me that you dwell a little too long on the consideration of your ailment.

And as for what you tell me, that it is very distressing to you to wish to act, and to be unable to act, I do not mean to say that we should wish to do that which we cannot do; but I mean to tell you that it is a great power before God to have the power to wish. Pass on further, I beseech you, and think on the great dereliction which our Master suffered in the Garden of Olives, and see how this dear Son having asked consolation of His good Father, who was unwilling to bestow it, He thought no more of it, sought it no more, was no more uneasy; but, as if He had never desired it, accomplished valiantly and courageously the work of our redemption.

After you have prayed the Father to console you, if He is not pleased to do so, think no more of it; but rouse your courage to complete the work of your salvation on the cross, as if you were never to descend from it, and as if the atmosphere of your life were never more to be clear and serene. What would you wish? We must know how to speak to God in

the thunder and in the whirlwind; we must look upon Him in the bush in the midst of fire and thorns; and to do this, we must take the shoes off our feet, and practise a great abnegation of our will and affections. But the goodness of God has not called you into His company, without strengthening you for all this. It is for Him to perfect His task. Truly it is a little long, for so the matter requires; but—patience!

In short, for the honour of God, acquiesce entirely in His will, and do not for a moment suppose that you can serve Him better otherwise; for we never serve Him well, unless when we serve Him as He wishes.

Now He wishes you to serve Him without relish, without enjoyment, with repugnances and convulsions of the soul. This service gives you no satisfaction, but it contents Him; it is not to your liking, but it is to His.

Granting that you were never to be delivered from your anguishes, what ought you to do? You ought to say to God: "I am Thine; if my miseries are pleasing to Thee, increase them in number and in duration." I have confidence in Our Lord that you will say this, and think no more of them; at least that you will not be uneasy. Act in this manner now, and tame yourself to pains, as if you were always to live in them; you will find that when you think no more of your deliverance, God will think of it, and when you make no hurry about it, He will run to you.

CHAPTER XI.

EXCESSIVE FEAR OF DEATH.*

IN our language, we call those who are dead the departed, as if we meant to say that they had passed from this life to a better; and, to speak the truth, the sojourn we make on earth during the days of our mortality, and to which we give the name of life, is rather a death than a life, since every moment of it leads us to the tomb.

This made an ancient philosopher say that we die every day, for every day takes away a portion of our life. Hence that beautiful expression of the wise Thecuan woman: "We all die, and we are on the earth like rivers that flow on to be engulfed in the sea."

* "Let us have great ideas and noble sentiments on the goodness of God; let us be filled with confidence in Him, and He will manifest Himself to us, and the sight of Him, which in this world is only an impress of His presence, elevating our souls to Him, will replenish us with joy. We ought especially to inspire the sick with this confidence and joy, their dejection rendering them more susceptible of impressions of fear, which is the beginning of sadness. Weakness of body conducts to timidity of soul, as we see in children and in old people. Above all, we should inspire the dying with this confidence, and they cannot be too much inspired with it, particularly if they belong to that class who have great reason to fear the judgments of God. The devil drives them along towards the abyss of despair, and the decline is rapid. We must fear during life, and hope much at death. When we are full of health and strength, it is necessary that fear should restrain our inconstancy and humble our pride. In the dying man, we have to fear neither presumption nor relapse. His sins will end with his life, and the dread of the judgments of God gives no room to look for presumption."—*P. Lombes.*

Nature has impressed on all men a horror of death; the Saviour Himself, espousing our flesh and becoming like to His brethren, sin excepted, would not exempt Himself from this infirmity, although He knew that this passage would set Him free from human miseries, and transfer Him to a glory which he possessed already, as far as His soul was concerned.

One of the ancients said that death ought not to be esteemed an evil, or regarded as unpleasant, when it has been preceded by a good life; for nothing makes it terrible unless that which follows it.

Against the fears that spring from the apprehension of the divine judgments, we have the buckler of a blessed hope, which makes us cast all our confidence, not on our own virtue, but on the mercy of God alone, assuring us that those who trust in His goodness shall never be confounded in their expectations.

I have committed many faults, it is true; but where is the foolish person who would think it in his power to commit more than God could forgive? and who will dare to measure, by the greatness of his crimes, the immensity of that infinite mercy which casts them all into the depths of the sea of oblivion, when we repent of them with love? It belongs only to madmen, like Cain, to say that their sin is too great to be forgiven; *because with the Lord there is mercy, and with him plentiful redemption: he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

It is true, indeed, that at the sight of our past sins, we ought always to be in fear and in sorrow; but we should not remain thus, we should pass beyond this resting place, and call faith, hope, and charity to our assistance: then our most bitter sorrow

will be changed into peace, our servile fear will become chaste and filial, and distrust of ourselves, like a piece of exceeding bitter aloes, will be sweetened by the sugar of confidence in God.

He who tarries at diffidence and fear alone, without passing on to hope and confidence, resembles him, who, from a rose-tree, would cull only the thorns, and leave the roses. We must imitate surgeons, who never open the veins unless the bandages for stopping the blood are all ready. *He who confides in God shall be as Mount Sion, which is never moved by the storm.*

CHAPTER XII.

REMEDIES AGAINST EXCESSIVE FEAR OF DEATH.

WHOEVER has a true desire of serving Our Lord, and avoiding sin, ought on no account to be afflicted by the thought of death or of the divine judgments; for, though both are to be feared, yet fear ought not to be of that terrifying nature which destroys the energy of the soul, but ought to be so blended with confidence in the goodness of God, that by this means it may become sweet.

Behold some efficacious remedies for diminishing an excessive fear of death:—

The first is perseverance in the service of God. I assure you that if you persevere in the exercise of devotion, as I perceive you do, you will find yourself greatly relieved from this torment; for your soul, keeping itself exempt from evil affections, and uniting itself more and more to God, will find itself less attached to this mortal life, and to all vain complacency in it.

Continue then in a devout life, as you have begun, and advance always from good to better, in the way in which you walk; and you will see that, after a time, those alarms will grow less, and you will not be disquieted so much.

Consider sometimes that you are a child of the Catholic Church, and rejoice in the thought; for the children of this mother who desire to live according to her laws, always die happy, and, as the blessed mother Teresa says, it is a great consolation at the hour of death to be a child of Holy Church.*

Finish all your prayers with acts of confidence, saying: *Lord, thou art my hope; on thee I have cast my confidence. Who ever hoped in God, and was disappointed? I hope in thee, O Lord, and I shall never be confounded.* In ejaculatory prayers during the day, and in the reception of the Most Holy Sacrament, always use words of love and hope towards Our Lord, such as: *Thou art my father, O Lord; O God, the spouse of my love, thou art the King of my heart, and the beloved of my soul; O sweet Jesus, thou art my dear master, my support, my refuge.*

Better not read books, or portions of books, in which death, judgment, and hell are treated of; because, thanks be to God, you have fully resolved to live in a Christian manner, and have no need of being impelled to it by motives of fear and terror.

* "How sweet it will be for us at the hour of death to see that we go to be judged by Him whom we have loved above all things! With what confidence may we present ourselves before Him, sure of receiving a favourable sentence from His mouth! What ineffable happiness to think that we do not go to a strange land, but to our true country, since it is that of the celestial spouse whom we so much love, and by whom we are so much loved."—*St. Teresa.*

The second remedy is the frequent remembrance of the great sweetness and mercy with which God, Our Saviour, receives souls on their departure, when they have confided themselves to Him during life, and endeavoured to serve and love Him, every one according to his vocation.

The third is love of paradise; for, in proportion as we esteem and love eternal felicity, we shall have less regret in quitting this mortal life.

The fourth is a certain intimacy with the blessed, often invoking and addressing them with words of praise and affection; for, having thus a familiar intercourse with the citizens of the celestial Jerusalem, it will grieve us less to part with those of the terrestrial. These, and the like considerations, carefully meditated on for some time, will greatly diminish an excessive dread of the divine judgments, and lead us to hope confidently that, being children of a Father so rich in goodness as to love us, and to wish to save us, so enlightened as to know the means suitable to this end, so wise as to arrange them, so powerful as to see them carried into effect, He will not wish to condemn us, so long as we do that which we are able in His divine service.*

Often adore, praise, and bless the most holy death of our crucified Lord, and place all your confidence in His merits, by which your death will be made

* "O my daughters, let us not desire to live at our ease, while we are here: one night in a bad way-side inn is all. Let us praise God, and endeavour to do penance in this life. Oh, how sweet will be the death of the sister, who, having done penance in this world for all her sins, will not have to pass through purgatory! Yes, it may happen that from this land of exile, she will enter straight into the enjoyment of glory. Nothing will trouble her; she will taste a celestial peace."—*St. Teresa.*

happy, and often say: *O divine death of my sweet Jesus, bless mine, and it will be blessed; I bless thee, and thou wilt bless me. O death more amiable than life!* Thus St. Charles, during the sickness of which he died, caused a picture of Our Lord's burial, and another of His agony in the Garden of Olives, to be placed before him, that he might console himself with the remembrance of the passion and death of his Redeemer.

Certainly, since Jesus Christ has died, we ought never to wish ill to death, or represent to ourselves the judgment on one side, without the cross of Our Saviour on the other, in order that, after having been excited to a holy fear by the remembrance of our sins, we may be restored to peace by confidence in our Redeemer.*

Lift up your heart often towards Jesus by a holy confidence, blended with a holy humility, saying: *I am miserable, O Lord, but thou wilt receive my misery into the bosom of thy mercy, and thou wilt bring me, with thy paternal hand, to the joy of thy*

* What can be more touching than the words of Bossuet, describing, before the most celebrated court in the world, the last moments of Henrietta of England?

"It seems as if God had preserved her judgment clear until the last breath, that she might continue to give testimonies of her faith. Dying, she loved the Saviour Jesus. Her arms rather than her desires failed her, to embrace the crucifix. I have seen her trembling hand struggle, as it fell, for new strength to apply to her lips the blessed sign of our redemption. Is not this to die amid the embraces and the kisses of the Lord? Ah! we can complete with a pious confidence this holy sacrifice for her repose. Jesus, in whom she hoped, whose cross she carried in her body by so many cruel pains, will give her again His blood, with which she has been already so deeply tintured, by participation in His sacraments and by communication in His sufferings."

inheritance. I am contemptible, vile, and abject; but thou wilt love me this day, because I have hoped in thee, and have desired to be thine.

It is true, death is hideous; but that life which is beyond the grave, and which the mercy of God will give us, is very desirable. We must by no means fall into diffidence; for, though we are sinners, yet we are far from being as bad as God is merciful to forgive those who repent, who have a will to amend, and who place their hopes in Jesus Christ. Death is no longer ignominious, but glorious, since the Son of God has undergone it. Hence the Blessed Virgin, and all the saints, have esteemed it an advantage to die, after the example of the Saviour, who allowed Himself, of His own free consent, to be attached to the cross; and death has become through Jesus Christ so sweet and amiable, that the angels would regard themselves happy if they could have the privilege of enduring it.*

We must die! These words are hard, but they are followed by a great happiness: it is in order to be with God that we die. You ought to be aware that no sensible person puts new wine into old vessels; the liquor of divine love cannot enter where the old Adam reigns.

Often consider the persons whom you most love, and from whom it would most grieve you to be sepa-

* "It is vain for those of a sincere faith to say that they do not wish to die so soon, in order that they may have time to become better; for they will not advance in virtue unless in proportion as they advance in the disposition which makes one desire death. To desire not to die is not a means to acquire more virtue; it is rather a mark that we have scarcely acquired any. Let those therefore who do not desire to die, in order that they may be able to become perfect, desire to die, and they will then be perfect."—*St. Augustine.*

rated, as those with whom you will be eternally united in heaven: for example, your husband, your little son John, your father. Oh, this little boy, through the help of God, will one day be happy in eternal life, in which he will enjoy my felicity and rejoice in it, and I shall enjoy his and rejoice in it, without our ever more being separated! The same with regard to your husband, your father, and others.

Let us walk, then, with confidence, under the standard of God's Providence, without yielding to those fears which might trouble us; for, if we think on death with uneasiness, the thought will be more injurious than advantageous to us. Let us think on it with peace and tranquillity of mind, reposing on the bosom of Providence, without putting ourselves in pain to know when we shall die or where, whether by an accident or not, suddenly or after a long illness, attended by others or not, confiding all to the goodness of God. Do we not see that He has care of the birds of heaven, and not one of their feathers falls to the ground without His leave? He knows the number of hairs on your head, and not one of them falls without His will. I wish, we ought to say, to belong entirely to God, not only from a sense of duty, but much more from affection. And, provided I accomplish His most holy will, what else have I to do but to abandon myself to His good Providence, full of confidence that He will have care of me in life and at death?

St. Augustine says that to die well it is necessary to live well, and such as our life is, such will be our death. These words are common and apparently trivial, but they contain a great lesson. Live well, and you will not fear death, or if you fear it, it will

be with a sweet and tranquil fear: relying on the merits of the passion of Our Lord, without which, indeed, death would be frightful and terrible to all men.

God will aid us provided we pray to Him,* since He has left us so many means of dying well, particularly that of contrition, which is so general and so efficacious as to efface all kinds of sins, and also the sacraments, by which we are restored to grace and washed from the guilt of sin; for the sacraments are like channels by which the merits of the passion of Our Lord flow into our souls.†

* “You will desire at the hour of death that confidence you have previously experienced: are you ignorant that what we have during the course of life will have its effect at death? What are we doing but dying? Cannot He who gives us confidence, continue it? What will the soul do at the last hour, unless that which it has always been doing? Are not all moments in the power of God, and is there one of them which may not be the moment of death? What should be done, then, at every moment but extend our confidence to the succeeding moments, and even to all eternity, if our life could continue so long?”—*Bossuet*.

† “It is by the last grace that death changes its nature for Christians, since, while it seems to divest us of every thing, it really begins, as the Apostle says (ii. Cor. v. 3), to clothe us, securing to us the eternal possession of true goods. So long as we are detained in this mortal abode, we live subject to change, because, if you allow me to use the expression, change is the law of the country in which we dwell, and we possess no good, even in the order of grace, which we may not lose a moment after, by the natural mutability of our desires. But as soon as we cease to count the hours, and to measure our life by days and years, issuing from figures which pass and shadows which disappear, we arrive at the kingdom of truth, where we are set free from the law of change. Then our soul is no more in danger, our resolutions no longer vacillate, death, or rather the grace of final perseverance, has power to fix them, and as the testament of Jesus Christ, by which He

Since then Our Lord has given us so many means of being saved, and since He desires our salvation more than we can desire it ourselves, what remains for us to do, unless to abandon ourselves to the guidance of His Divine Providence, seeking nothing, and refusing nothing? Oh, how happy are they who live in this holy indifference, and who, awaiting what God will arrange for them, prepare themselves by a good life for a good death!

The bed of a good death ought to have for its mattress the love of God; but it is proper to have the head reclining on two pillows, which are humility and confidence in the divine mercy.*

CHAPTER XIII.

GOD DOES NOT ABANDON US AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

As a gentle mother, leading her little child with her, helps it to walk, carries it according as she sees necessity, allows it to make some steps by itself in

gave Himself to us, was confirmed for ever, according to the nature of testaments and the doctrine of the Apostle (Heb. ix, 15), by the death of this divine testator, so the death of the faithful causes the blessed testament by which we give ourselves to the Saviour to become irrevocable."—*Bossuet*.

* "The first of these pillows, which is humility, makes us know our misery, and inspires us with a salutary fear; but this humility is at the same time courageous and generous, so that while it casts us down, it also raises us up, by faith in the Almighty, making us rely upon Him alone: thus the first of these pillows conducts us to the second, which is that of confidence in God. Now, what is this confidence, unless a hope strengthened by the consideration of the infinite goodness of Our Heavenly Father, who desires our welfare more than we can desire it ourselves? *O my God, I have hoped in thee, and I shall never be confounded.*"—*De Baudry*.

places which are very smooth, and not at all dangerous, sometimes taking it by the hand and steadying it, sometimes lifting it up in her arms and carrying it for a while; so Our Lord has a continual care over the guidance of His children, that is to say, of those who have charity, making them walk before Him, reaching them His hand in difficulties, and carrying them Himself in trials which He sees would otherwise be insupportable to them. This He has declared by Isaias: "*I am thy God, taking thee by the hand, and saying to thee: Fear nothing, for I have helped thee.*" And this conduct, full of sweetness, God observes in regard to our souls from their introduction into charity until their final perfection, which is effected only at the hour of death. *He who perseveres to the end will be saved.*

Finally, the celestial King, having guided the soul which He loves even to the end of life, assists it still in its blessed departure, by which he draws it to the nuptial bed of eternal glory, which is the delightful reward of holy perseverance. And then the soul, all ravished with love for its Beloved, representing to itself the multitude of favours and helps by which He has prevented and assisted it during the days of its pilgrimage, kisses incessantly the sweet succouring hand that led it along the way, and confesses that it is from Our Divine Saviour alone it holds all its happiness, since He has done for it all that which the great patriarch Jacob desired for his journey, when he beheld the ladder from heaven. "O Lord," it then says, "Thou hast been with me, and hast kept me in the way by which I have come; Thou hast given me the bread of Thy sacraments for my nourishment; Thou hast clothed me with the nuptial robe of charity; Thou hast brought me into this

abode of glory which is Thy house, O my eternal Father! What, O Lord, remains, unless for me to declare that Thou art my God, for ever and ever?"
Amen.

Such is the order of our progress to eternal life, for the accomplishment of which Divine Providence has established from eternity a multitude, a distinction, and a succession of necessary graces, with the dependence which they have one upon another.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOD WILL NEVER DESTROY A SOUL SUBMISSIVE TO HIS WILL.

WE deal with a Master who is rich in mercy to those who invoke Him; He forgives a debt of ten thousand talents on a small petition. We must have sentiments worthy of His goodness; we must serve Him with fear; but while we tremble, we must not cease to rejoice. The humility that discourages is not a good humility.

God loves us; He knows what we require better than we do ourselves. Whether we live or die we are the Lord's. To Him belong the keys of life and death; those who hope in Him shall never be confounded.

Let us not amuse ourselves so much with trifles; let us look only to His most holy will. Let this be our beautiful star; it will guide us to Jesus Christ, either in the crib or on Calvary. He who follows it will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of eternal life, which is not subject to death.

Although God is omnipotent and there is nothing impossible to Him, yet in His mercy He has bound

Himself not to destroy for ever a soul whose will, at its exit from the body, is submissive to His will. As the tree falls, so it lies; and the soul will remain for ever in that state in which it is found at the end of life: if rebellious to the will of God, its portion will be the chalice of the wicked, and in the lake of fire and brimstone; if submissive to His holy will, its salvation is unquestionable, though a delay may be made in purgatory, while some rust is burning away, since nothing defiled can enter heaven. So that, by unreservedly abandoning one's self into the arms of God during life and at death, there is nothing to fear; because, besides that His will ought to be our satisfaction, and He does not desire that any one should perish, but that all should come to salvation by penance, *therefore it is that He will never send a soul submissive to His will into exterior darkness, which is prepared only for rebels to His light and to His love.*

CHAPTER XV.

SENTIMENTS AT THE SIGHT OF DEATH.

AFTER having been tossed about on the sea of the world, and having encountered so many perils from the tempest of vanity, which again and again threatened me with shipwreck, I present myself at last before Thee, O my God, to render Thee an account of the talent with which Thy infinite goodness has entrusted me. I now behold the earth which I have been so sorry to think of leaving behind me, and the risks that poor mortals run. How false are the charms of the world! how powerful are its attractions! how deceitful are its allurements! how sweet

its honey appears to the eye, though it has the sourness of vinegar! Prepare thyself, O my soul, to go to the heavenly Jerusalem. Behold the end of life: it has no other work than that of death, and a well-regulated devotion produces no other result than eternal life. This is the autumn in which we gather the fruits of eternity. The plant, which has received its increase from heaven, will soon be plucked; and mortals will no longer behold any thing of it on earth save the roots, the sad remnants of corruption. The flower, which the sun has painted with various colours, will soon fade away. Consider that life flies as a shadow, passes as a dream, evaporates as smoke; human ambition cannot lay hold on any thing solid. All is transitory.

The sun, which rises on our horizon, hastens his course and pursues the night, and the night solicits the light to come in order to roll even the most beautiful portions of the universe into a kind of nothingness—I mean the starry heavens. The rivers flow on to the ocean as if the ocean, which is their centre, ought to give them repose. The moon appears on high, sometimes full, sometimes on her decline, and seems to be pleased, as if she were about to finish her labours and her course. The winter deprives the trees of their honour, in order to give us a lesson on death. I am no longer attached to earth by any tie or affection. I have resigned all my desires into Thy hands, O my God; for a long time Thou hast been teaching me to die. The sentiments of the world, which are now dead in me, have taught me the lesson of death.

Mortifications of the spirit have weakened my body. I have not lived of late, since I have been dead by design and determination; I have esteemed

nothing life but that which is in Thee. I could not call myself alive, since all my intentions were to extinguish that fire which constitutes the life of worldlings, in order to form my existence to death, or rather to a sweet sleep, in which I should endeavour to unite myself to Thee, and to approach to eternal life. But, O my God, how vain and illusive have been my plans! I did not consider formerly that it was necessary to die actually in order to approach to Thy grandeur and enjoy the bliss of beatitude. Now at dissolution, the raptures of my soul present me with a sample of what is at hand. I have no more faith in ecstasies, for I see; I have no more hope, for I begin to possess; and charity alone remains to unite me to Thee, who art charity itself, whence proceeds the fire of love which consumes the hearts of the devout. And as fire, of its own nature, mounts upward, so my heart, burning with charity, flies towards Thee; and the more I perceive the powers of my body to become enfeebled, the more my spirit is fortified. In this state, I can see as in a mirror the nature of beatitude.

How indescribable are the joys and delights of a soul that is in the state of grace! Sensual pleasures bring satiety, an evidence of their imperfection; but the contentments of the soul are infinite, always increase the appetite, and never lose their sweetness, because they have no end, and are not limited by the senses, or by sensible objects.

Let us go forth then from this world, and ascend to heaven, by the help of the mercy of God. And you, devout souls, are you not content to follow me? Do you fear the passage? Are you not dead in God, to be resuscitated glorious? Am I to believe that you are still alive, since you are without will, with-

out affection, having renounced yourselves to embrace the word, and the commandments which heaven has dictated to you? You fear the evil of dissolution: consider that Our Lord suffered so great a pain for you. You fear to quit the medleys of the world, where vanity reigns, where avarice tarnishes the most beautiful virtues, where infidelity holds dominion with the sway of a despot, where virtue is trampled under foot and vice carries off the prize of honour, where sins are drunk down like water, where the just behold so many foreshadowings of hell and of abomination: retire from those lakes of wretchedness, divest yourselves of those sentiments of vanity, in order to go into a place where an everlasting spring-time flourishes, and where the sad and horrible phantoms of misery are no longer to be witnessed.

Let us advance, then, dear souls, let us not be stayed by the enticements of the age. There is above us a solid, a permanent good, which inebriates souls with so sweet an ambrosia, that they can scarcely know their joys, so many contentments do they possess.

Are you not weary of seeing the rivers flow on to the sea, and the seasons of the year follow one another in invariable order? Are you not content with having gathered the flowers of spring, and tasted the fruits of autumn? Is it not enough to have bruised the roses and the lilies, with which to sprinkle the couch of your sensuality?

Does it not suffice to have so often seen the sun and moon, so many days and nights? Think you that the trees of the forest will produce other leaves, or that nature will yield something new? The twinkling lamps of heaven will send down no other light.

Quit the world, then, devout souls. And if you

would wish to postpone the will of the Lord, at least be prepared for the appointments of heaven on the matter. Have your conscience always in a good state, so as to render an account of your actions; imagine that the judgment of God is every hour over your head, that only a little sigh is needed to conduct you to sentence, that a faint can overpower us, and put us in a state in which we can no longer even know ourselves. The flower which at morning unfolded itself has at evening passed and gone. Consider that death may meet you in the morning; or at evening, that you may sink to rest with the sun; that in the gardens of the world, under the rose and the lily, death is hidden like a serpent in the grass.

O my God, I will not give Thee my soul, for it is already a long time since Thou hast purchased it at the price of Thy blood, and Thou hast withdrawn it from the captivity of sin and death. Happy shall it be if Thou receive it, pardoning its faults.

O great God! now is the time to render an account; the justice of Thy judgments makes me fear, but Thy infinite mercy makes me hope. I cast myself into Thy arms to implore pardon; I will cast myself at Thy feet, and water them with my tears; may the stream that flows from my eyes be a testimony to my repentance, that I may have the happiness, through Thy infinite goodness, to share in the effects of Thy mercy! *Amen.**

* "The goodness of God is not opposed to His justice; for if it takes His victims in one way, it returns them in another: instead of overthrowing them by vengeance, it overthrows them by humility; instead of crushing them by chastisement, it crushes them by contrition; and if justice requires to be satisfied by blood, goodness offers that of a God. Thus, far

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW MUCH GOD LOVES THE SAINTS, NOTWITHSTANDING
THEIR DEFECTS AND IMPERFECTIONS.

To every man, however holy he may be, there always remains some imperfection, because he has been drawn from nothingness: so that we do no injury to the saints when, in recounting their virtues, we relate their sins and defects; but, on the contrary, those who write their lives seem, for this reason, to do a great injury to mankind by concealing the sins and imperfections of the saints, under pretence of honouring them, not referring to the commencement of their lives, for fear of diminishing the esteem of their sanctity. Oh, no, indeed, this is not to act properly; but it is to wrong the saints and all posterity. All the great saints, when writing the lives of other saints, have told us their faults and imperfections candidly, and thought, as was right, that by this means they should render as much service to God, and even to the saints, as by recounting their virtues. The great St. Jerome, writing the eulogy of his dear daughter St. Paula, tells her imperfections plainly and openly, condemning some of her actions himself with an admirable ingenuousness, always making truth and sincerity walk hand in hand, in the description of her virtues and her defects, know-

from being antagonists, they cheerfully shake hands. We should neither presume nor despair. Presume not, O sinners, because it is true that God takes vengeance; but abandon not yourselves to despair, because, if I may be allowed the expression, it is still more true that God forgives."—*Bossuet*.

ing well that one would be useless without the other. For, beholding the defects of the saints while admiring their lives, we learn how great is the goodness of God, who forgave them, and we also learn to avoid the like, and to do penance for them, as the saints have done, in the same manner as we behold their virtues in order to imitate them.*

When persons of the world wish to praise those whom they love, they always relate their accomplishments, their virtues, and their excellent qualities, giving them all the titles which may render them more honourable, carefully hiding their sins and imperfections, and scrupulously forgetting every thing that might make them appear mean or contemptible; but our holy mother the Church acts in quite a different manner; for, though she singularly loves her children, nevertheless, when she wishes to praise and exalt them, she exactly relates the sins which they committed before their conversion, in order to render more honour and glory to the majesty of Him who sanctified them, showing forth resplendently His infinite mercy by which He raised them from their miseries and sins, loading them afterwards with His graces, and giving them His holy love,

* "There are some saints," says a great servant of God, an author very enlightened in spiritual things, M. Boudon, "there are some saints, who never cease to commit many faults, and sometimes even more than other persons who have only a very middling virtue; but still there is a great difference between these two classes of souls. For the one, though they have many imperfections, have none voluntarily, and they would rather die than commit the smallest fault with full advertence; they have a true intention, as St. Augustine says, to do everything to arrive at high sanctity and to practise heroic virtue. The others, though freer from faults, are far from possessing such a vigorous love."

by means of which they arrived at the height of sanctity.

Certainly, our good mother the Church, in writing or recounting the sins of the saints, has had no other intention unless to show us that she does not wish we should be astonished or put in pain about what we have been, or at the sins which we have committed, or at our present miseries, provided we have a firm and inviolable resolution to belong entirely to God, and generously to embrace perfection and all the means which may help us to advance in holy love, acting in such a manner that this resolution may be efficacious, and may produce fruits. Indeed, our miseries and weaknesses, however great they may be, ought not to discourage us, but ought rather to humble us and make us cast ourselves into the arms of the divine mercy, which will be so much the more glorified in us as our miseries are greater, if happily we rise from them: which we ought to hope to do by means of the grace of Our Lord.

The great St. Chrysostom, speaking of St. Paul, praises him most appropriately, and discourses of him with so much honour and esteem that it is a wonderful thing to see how he relates the virtues, the perfections, the excellences, the prerogatives, the graces with which God had adorned and enriched the soul of the holy apostle; but afterwards, the same doctor, to show that all these gifts and graces proceeded, not from the saint, but from the infinite goodness of God, treats of his defects, and very exactly relates his sins and imperfections. "Behold," he says, "this cruel persecutor of the Church—God makes of him a vessel of election; behold this great sinner—God changes him from a wolf into a lamb; behold with how many graces God replenishes

this obstinate and ambitious man, making him so submissive that he uses these words: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* so humble that he calls himself the least of the apostles and the greatest of sinners, and so charitable that he becomes all to all to gain all." "Who is sick," says this great apostle, "and I am not sick? who is sad and I am not sad? who is joyful and I am not joyful? who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" Assuredly the ancient Fathers, who wrote the lives of saints, were exceedingly precise in relating their defects and sins, in order to exalt and magnify so much the more the goodness of Our Lord, who was pleased thus to glorify Himself in them, showing the efficacy of His grace, by which they were converted.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SWEET AND HAPPY DEATH OF THE PREDESTINED.

God having once drawn His faithful servants to Him, and taken their salvation under His protection, He does not quit them until He has guided them to their journey's end, and lodged them safe in heaven;*

* Behold in what terms Bossuet renders an account of the edifying manner in which Henrietta of England received the last sacraments: "How far superior did she appear to those tepid Christians who imagine their death to be at hand when they prepare for confession, who receive the holy sacraments only by force! This lady sends for the priests before sending for the physicians. She asks herself for the sacraments of the Church, with compunction for Penance, with fear and yet with confidence for the Eucharist, with a pious eagerness for the holy Unction of the dying. Far from being terrified, she wishes to receive this last sacrament with consciousness; she listens to the explanation of those holy ceremonies, of those

having received great services from His saints, He usually gives them towards the close of their days some foretastes of the felicity of the future life, in order the better to dispose them to sigh for that infinite beatitude which awaits them in paradise, to disgust them with all terrestrial things, and to make them banish from their hearts every unworthy desire: so that, seeing they can neither sing nor hear the divine praises in this world according to their liking, they enter into extraordinary desires of being delivered from the fetters of this life, to go into a place where God is perfectly and supremely loved; and those desires, taking possession of their hearts, become so powerful and so pressing in the breasts of those sacred lovers, that they render their souls all languishing and sick of love, until this holy passion rises to such a degree that they sweetly die of it.

Thus the glorious and seraphic St. Francis having been for a long time weary of living, weary with the strong affection of praising God, at last, in his closing years, received by a special revelation an assurance of his eternal salvation, and being no longer able to contain his joy, and his ardent desires taking every day new increase, his soul at length burst from his body with a spring towards heaven, pronouncing these sacred words: *Draw my soul out of prison, O Lord, that I may bless thy holy name; the just expect until thou givest me the desired rest.* So it is with

apostolic prayers, which, by a sort of divine charm, suspend the most violent sorrows, which cause death to be forgotten (*I have often seen it*) by those who hear them with faith; she follows them, she conforms herself to them, she peacefully presents her body to the sacred oil, or rather to the blood of Jesus Christ, which flows so abundantly with this precious liquor."

all the saints, whose death is ever most precious, though it happens in diverse ways, according to the Providence of God; for their spirit, like a celestial nightingale, shut up in the cage of the body, in which it cannot sing with freedom the divine benedictions, knows well that it would warble better and entone more joyfully its beautiful notes, if it could only gain the free air to enjoy its liberty and the society of the other songsters, among the gay and flourishing hills of the happy country; therefore, delivered from the cage of the body, withdrawn from its mortal prison, set free from slavery, it flies on high to heaven to be united with the choirs of angels and saints, and to join with them in a sweet harmony of delicious canticles, singing, praising, and blessing for ever the infinite mercy of God.

My God! how desirable is such a death! oh, how lovely is the temple to which the souls of the saints fly! There the vaults re-echo with praise; and what a happiness belongs to those who dwell in the sacred abode where so many celestial musicians and divine choristers sing with a holy emulation of love the songs of everlasting sweetness!

As soon as a soul enters paradise, to make irrevocably its home and resting-place there, in those sacred mansions and those holy and desirable tabernacles, God disposes it and strengthens it, by the excellent light of His glory, to be capable of beholding so sublime and so resplendent an object as the Divinity. "Divers," says Pliny, "who, seeking for precious stones, descend into the sea, take some oil in their mouths, in order that, pouring it out, they may enjoy more day to see in the waters through which they move." In like manner, the saints being plunged in the ocean of the divine

essence, God sheds through their understanding a special light, which makes a sort of day to them in the abyss of light inaccessible, in order that, by the brightness of glory, they may behold the brightness of the Divinity.

All the blessed are perfectly happy, and have an inexpressible contentment to know that after having satiated all the desires of their hearts, and fully replenished their every capacity in the enjoyment of an infinite good, which is God, yet there still remain, in this infinity, infinite perfections to be seen, to be enjoyed, and to be possessed, which the Divine Majesty alone knows, It alone comprehending Itself.

Ah ! how beautiful it is to see those happy citizens of Paradise, and truly great Princes of the Holy Empire, more invested on all sides by the ocean of the Divinity, than fishes are enclosed by the waves in the bosom of the sea, than birds as they fly are environed by the air, than stars enchased in the azure firmament are surrounded by the heavens ! Oh ! what felicity, to be more intimately united to God than light is to the purest crystal, than fire to the gold which shines like the sun in the crucible, than the soul to the body, than grace to the soul ! Let him who can, explain the full rejoicing of the saints, which springs from the unreserved enjoyment of the sovereign uncreated good, which is fathomed only by abysses, measured only by immensity, bounded only by infinity, limited only by eternity, and comprehended only by the Divinity itself. Thence the perfect friends of God, now fully possessed, draw an extreme contentment, seeing themselves infinitely above all that they could have expected, loaded with honour, inebriated with the most pleasurable torrents of the house of God, true

rendezvous of all holy and chaste delights, which the most high God of peace and of all consolation spreads continually to rejoice His faithful servants, satiating them to the full, yet without disgust for the meats of His divinely royal table, worthy of the most happy, the most illustrious, and the most glorious monarch! God, as a most loving father, is pleased thus to feast and entertain His true children, begotten of His grace and recognised by the glory which He shares with them: which He does in a manner infinitely admirable; for, from enjoyment springs desire, and in proportion as desire increases, the enjoyment increases, this without weariness and that without anguish, both with perfect pleasure and contentment. It is said that those who keep in their mouth a certain Scythian herb suffer neither hunger nor thirst, so deliciously are they sustained by it; in like manner when the will enjoys God, it reposes in Him with a sovereign complacency, and, nevertheless, it ceases not the motion of its desires, ardently desiring love, and loving desire infinitely.

Nightingales take so much pleasure in their song, according to Pliny, that sometimes for fifteen days and nights, they never cease to warble, vying always with one another to sing better; so that when they sing most melodiously, they experience the greatest complacency, and this increase of complacency leads them to still greater efforts, their complacency rising in such a manner with their song, and their song with their complacency, that many a time they are seen to die, and their throat is found burst with the force of singing. O God! how melodiously do those beautiful souls, who hold the first rank in heaven, and who surpass the ordinary blessed as much as they exceeded them in merits and

sanctity here on earth, chant the divine benedictions ! In proportion as they praise God, they are pleased with praising Him, and in proportion as they are pleased with praising Him, they desire to praise Him yet better ; and to content themselves, unable to wish any increase to God, because He has infinitely more than they can desire, or even think of, they desire at least that His name may be praised, exalted, blessed, honoured, and glorified more and more, in heaven and on earth, by men and angels !

Would to God that we could act thus, and that all the faculties of our souls were as so many sacred tubes, on which to sound the divine canticles of praise and jubilation !

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEATH OF THE SAINT'S YOUNG SISTER, JEANNE DE SALES,
IN THE ARMS OF MADAME DE CHANTAL.

WELL now, my dear daughter, is it not reasonable that the will of God should be accomplished in what is not pleasing to us, as well as in what is pleasing to us ? But I must hasten to tell you, that my good mother drank the chalice with a truly Christian constancy ; and her virtue, of which I had so good an opinion before, has greatly advanced in my esteem.

On Sunday morning, she sent for my brother the Canon, to come to her, and because she had seen him very sad, and all the other brothers too, the preceding evening, she began to say to him : " I have been dreaming the whole night that my daughter Jane was dead. Tell me, I pray, is it true ? " My bro-

ther, who expected that I should have arrived to tell her, seeing this beautiful opportunity to make the announcement: "It is true, mother," he said. And nothing more; for he had not strength to add anything. "The will of God be done," said my good mother, and she wept for a time abundantly; and then, calling her maid: "I wish to rise," said she, "to go into the chapel, to pray to God for my poor daughter," and immediately she did as she had said. Not a single word of impatience, not a look of uneasiness, a thousand benedictions to God, and a thousand resignations to His will. Never have I seen a more tranquil sorrow: so many tears as were marvellous; yet all with the most simple emotions of the heart, without any kind of bitterness: she was still her dear child. Well now! ought I not to love such a mother?

Yesterday, the Feast of All-Saints, I was the extraordinary confessor to the family, and, with the Most Holy Sacrament, I sealed this mother's heart against all sadness. As for the rest, she thanks you infinitely for the care and the maternal love you exercised in regard to the little deceased, with a gratitude as great as if God had preserved her by this means. The same is said to you by all the members of the family, which has shown itself extremely well pleased with the circumstances of this death; above all, our Boisy—whom I love especially.

I know well that you would fain ask me: "And you, how did you bear it?" Yes, for you desire to know what I did. Alas! my daughter, I am only a man, and nothing more: my heart was affected more than I ever could have imagined. But the truth is, the grief of my mother, and yours, contributed much to it; for I was afraid of your heart, and my

mother's. But, live Jesus! I will always take the side of Divine Providence; it does every thing well, and disposes of all things for the best. What a happiness for this child, to have been *taken away from the world, that iniquity might not alter her understanding*, and to have left this miry place before being defiled by it! We gather the strawberries and the cherries before the bergamot pears; but it is because their season requires it. Let us allow God to gather what He has planted in His orchard: He takes every thing in its season.

You can imagine, my dear daughter, how cordially I loved this little sister. I had begotten her to her Saviour; it was I who baptized her with my own hand: now about fourteen years ago. She was the first creature on whom I exercised my sacerdotal powers. I was her spiritual father, and fondly promised myself to make of her one day something good. And that which rendered her exceedingly dear to me (I speak the truth), was that she was yours. But, nevertheless, my dear daughter, in the midst of my heart of flesh, which has experienced so many emotions at this death, I perceive very clearly a certain tranquillity, a certain sweet repose of my mind on Divine Providence, which spreads through my soul a great contentment, blended with its grief.

You have now my feelings represented to you as I have been able. But you, my dear daughter, what would you say, when you would tell me how you found yourself on this occasion? Tell me, I pray, does not our mariner's needle always point to its beautiful star, to its holy star, to its God? Your heart, what did it do? Did you scandalize those who saw you on this event? Now, my daughter, tell me this plainly; for, you see, I would not be

content if you offered your life, or that of any of your other children, in exchange for that of the deceased.

No, my dear daughter, we must not only be willing that God should strike us, but we must be glad that it should be on the side He pleases. We must leave the choice to God, for it belongs to Him. David offered his life for that of his Absalom, but it was for fear his son should have died lost: in this case we must conjure God; but in temporal losses, O my daughter, let God slap us and pinch us wherever He pleases, and whatever chords of our lute He pleases to touch, let Him always find a sweet harmony. Lord Jesus! without reserve, without *ifs*, without *buts*, without exception, without limitation, may Thy will be done over father, over mother, over daughter, in every thing, and every where. Ah! I do not say that we must not desire or pray for their preservation; but to say to God: Leave this one and take that one—my dear daughter, we must not say it. Neither shall we say it, my daughter; no, by the help of divine grace.

It seems to me that I see you, my dear daughter, with your vigorous heart, which loves and desires ardently. I am pleased with it; for those hearts half-dead-and-alive—to what are they good? But we must have a particular exercise, once every week, namely, to desire and love the will of God more earnestly, more tenderly, and more affectionately than anything in the world; and this, not only in occurrences that are supportable, but even in those most insupportable. You will find something exquisite on this point in the little book, the *Spiritual Combat*, which I have so often recommended to you.

Alas! my daughter, to speak the truth, this lesson

is high ; but God, for whom we learn it, is the Most High. You have, my daughter, four children ; you have a father, a father-in-law, a dear brother, and then, again, a spiritual father : all these are very dear to you, and with reason, for God wishes it. Well ! if God were to take them all from you, would you not still have enough in having Him ? Is not this according to your view ? When we have only God, have we not abundance ?

Alas ! the Son of God, our dear Jesus, had scarcely so much on the cross, when, having quitted and left all for love and obedience to His Father, He was abandoned and forsaken by His Father ; and the torrent of anguish carrying away His barque to desolation, scarcely could He recognise the needle of the compass, which was not only turned to, but was inseparably united with, His Father. Yes, He was *one* with His Father ; but the inferior part neither knew nor perceived it : a trial which the divine goodness never made, and never will make, on any other soul ; for no one could endure it.

My daughter, though God takes every thing away from us, yet He will never take himself away, so long as we do not wish it. But still more : all our losses and separations are only for a little moment. Oh, truly, for so little we ought to have patience.

I pour myself out, it seems, a little too much. But what ! I am my heart, which never thinks it says too much with so dear a daughter as you. I send you an "escutcheon," to please you, and since you desire to have the services performed in the place where this child reposes in her body, I am satisfied, but without great pomp, unless that which the Christian custom justly requires ; for to what good is anything else ? You will have drawn out

afterwards in a list all the expenses, and those of her sickness, and you will send the account to me; for I wish this also. And in the meanwhile, we will pray to God on our side for her soul, and pleasantly offer her little honours. We will not meet at her month's mind; no, my daughter, there is no need for so much ceremony about one who never held any rank in the world; for it would rather be to mock her. You know me; I love simplicity in death and in life. I shall be glad to know the name and title of the church where she reposes.

CHAPTER XIX.

DEATH OF THE COUNTESS DE SALES, MOTHER OF THE SAINT.*

BUT, O my God! my dearest daughter, should we not in all things, and everywhere, adore the Supreme Providence, whose counsels are always holy, good, and amiable? Behold how He has been pleased to draw from this miserable world, our dearest and most excellent mother, to have her, as I confidently hope, near Himself, and at His right hand. Let us confess, my well-beloved daughter, let us confess, *that God is good and His mercy endureth for ever*: all His wills are just, and all His decrees equitable; His good-pleasure is always holy, and His ordinances are most amiable.

As for me, I confess, my daughter, that I experienced great grief on this separation; for I must make the confession of my weakness, after having made

* Letter to Madame De Chantal.

that of the divine goodness. But nevertheless, my daughter, it was a tranquil grief, though acute; for I said with David: *I have been silent, O Lord, and opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it.* Had it not been for this, I would undoubtedly have cried out piteously under the stroke; but it was not according to my mind, that I should dare to do so, or manifest any discontent under the strokes of a paternal hand, which, in truth, thanks to its goodness, I have learned to love tenderly from my youth.

But you would wish perhaps to know how this good woman ended her days. Behold then a little history of it; for it is to you I speak, to you, I say, to whom I have given this mother's place in my memento at mass, without taking away that which you had before; for I could not bring myself to do it, so firmly do you hold that which you hold in my heart, and thus you hold the first and the last place there.

This mother then came here in winter; and during the month which she remained, she made a general review of her soul, and renewed her desires of well-doing, with very great affection indeed, and she went away the most contented in the world with me, from whom, as she said, she had drawn more consolation than she had ever done before. She continued in this good way until Ash-Wednesday, when she went to the parish church of Torens, where she confessed and communicated with very great devotion, and heard three masses and vespers. During the day, being in bed, and unable to sleep, she caused her maid to read her three chapters of *The Introduction*, to entertain her in good thoughts, and desired her to mark the *protestation* to be made the following morning; but God was content with her good will, and

disposed of matters otherwise: for morning being come, this good lady arose, and, while combing her hair, suddenly she fell down as if dead.

My poor brother, your child, who still slept, being informed of what had happened, ran in his night-dress, and lifted her up, and helped her to walk, and assisted her with "essences," "imperial waters," and other things which are recommended in cases of accidents; so that she recovered, and began to speak, but almost unintelligibly, so much had the tongue and the throat been affected.

A messenger came for me, and I hastened immediately with the physician and the apothecary, who found her apoplectic, and paralysed in one half the body. Her stupor was of such a nature, that it was easy to awake her; and during those moments of consciousness, she manifested a perfect clearness of judgment, using the hand that still remained sound, and speaking very apropos of God and her soul. Sometimes she sought for the crucifix, groping (so suddenly had she become blind), and kissed it. Never did she take any thing without making the sacred sign over it: and thus she received the holy oils.

On my arrival, blind and drowsy as she was, she caressed me much, and said:—*This is my son and my father*, and kissed me, embracing me with her arm, and kissed the hand to me before every thing. She continued in the same state nearly two days and a half, after which it was difficult to awake her; and on the first of March, she surrendered her soul sweetly and peacefully to Our Lord, with a countenance of greater beauty than perhaps she had ever borne in life, remaining one of the loveliest dead I have ever seen.

I have still to tell you that I had the courage to give her the last benediction, to close her eyes and mouth, and to give her the kiss of peace, at the moment of her departure: after which my heart filled, and I wept over this mother more than I have ever done since I entered the Church; but it was without spiritual bitterness, thanks be to God! Behold what passed.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RAPIDITY OF TIME.

THESE temporal years pass away; the months are reduced to weeks, the weeks to days, the days to hours, and the hours to moments, which are all that we possess, but which we possess only in proportion as they perish. The more perishable our existence, the more amiable ought it to be to us, since this life being full of miseries, we should have no greater consolation than to know that it rapidly vanishes to give place to a holy eternity, which is prepared for us in the abundance of the mercy of God, and to which our soul incessantly aspires by continual thoughts arising from its own nature, though it cannot hope to arrive there but by other thoughts more exalted, with which the Author of nature inspires us.

Indeed, I never consider eternity without much sweetness; for, I say, how can my soul extend its thought to this infinity, unless there is some kind of proportion between it and eternity? But when I feel that my desire runs after my thought, my joy takes an incredible increase; for, I know that wa

never desire, with a true desire, any thing but what is possible. My desire then assures me that I can possess eternity: what remains to me more than to hope that I shall possess it? And this assurance proceeds from the knowledge I have of the infinite goodness of Him, who would not create souls capable of thinking on, and tending to, eternity, without giving them the means of attaining to it.

Let us then often say: Every thing passes, and after the few days of this mortal life, an infinite eternity will come. Little does it matter whether we have conveniences or inconveniences here, provided that for all eternity we are happy.

A great soul sends all its best thoughts and affections forward to the infinity of eternity, and being immortal, it esteems too short all that which is not eternal, too small all that which is not infinite, and rising above the delights, or rather the vile amusements, of this life, it keeps its eyes steadily fixed on the immensity of eternal goods, and the vastness of eternal years.*

Oh, how desirable is eternity, at the cost of miserable and perishable vicissitudes! Let time flow by, with which we flow on to be transformed into the glory of the children of God.

Alas! when I consider how I have employed

* An author of the present day, rather original, writes these lines:—"Come, die in peace; have you not for a long time been dying a little every day? Death has nothing to surprise you; meet it like an old friend. You are an exile, it comes to lead you back to your country; you are a martyr, it brings you the palm of victory.

"What thread remains to be broken? None, but that of your life. Your balloon is impatient; it has only to throw out the sand, and presently it is aloft, between the eagles and the sun."

God's time, I am in pain lest He should not give me His eternity, since He gives it only to those who use His time well.

O God! the years pass away, and run as a thread imperceptibly one after another; dividing our existence, they divide our mortal life, and ending, they end our days.

Oh, how incomparably more amiable is eternity, since its duration is without end, and its days are without nights, and its contentments are without variation! How much I desire that, in a high degree, you may possess this admirable good of a holy eternity! What a happiness for my soul, if God, showing it mercy, grants it also this consolation!

CHAPTER XXI.

WE SHOULD ABANDON OURSELVES TO GOD IN LIFE AND
IN DEATH.

AMONG the praises given by the saints to Abraham, St. Paul mentions this above every other, *that he believed, hoping against all hope*. God had promised to multiply his posterity as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea-shore; and, notwithstanding, gave him an order to sacrifice his only son. Yet Abraham did not lose hope, but believed that while obeying the commandment to immolate his son, God would not fail to keep His word.

Great indeed was his hope; for he saw nothing on which to rely, except the word of God. Oh, how true and solid a foundation is this word, for it is infallible!

Abraham proceeded then with extraordinary simplicity to fulfil the directions of God; for he made no more hesitation or reply than when God had told him to quit his country and his father's house. Walking three days and three nights with his son, not knowing precisely whither he went, carrying the wood of sacrifice, his son asked him where was the holocaust, to which he replied: *My son, the Lord will provide it.*

O my God! how happy we should be, if we could accustom ourselves to make answer to our hearts, when they are in fretfulness about any thing: *Our Lord will provide for it*, and then to have no more anxiety or trouble than Isaac! For he was silent afterwards, believing that the Lord would provide what was necessary, as his father had told him.

Great indeed is the confidence which God requires we should have in His paternal care and in His holy providence; but why should we not have it, seeing that no person was ever deceived therein, and no one confides in God without reaping the fruits of his confidence?

Consider what Our Lord says to His apostles, to establish them in this holy and loving confidence: *When I sent you into the world without purse, without silver, without any provision, was any thing wanting to you? They say: No. Go, He says to them, and be not solicitous for what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or how you shall be clothed, or how you shall speak when brought before magistrates; for, on every occasion, my Father who is in heaven, will give you that which is necessary.*

“But I am so little spiritual,” some one will say, “I do not know how to treat with the great, I have no knowledge.” It is all one; go, and confide in

God, for He says: *though a mother should forget her child, yet will not I forget you; for, I bear you engraven on my heart, and on my hands.*

Think you that He who is careful to provide nourishment for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, that neither sow nor reap, will fail to provide all that is necessary for those who fully trust in His Providence, and who are capable of being for ever united with Him, who is the sovereign good?*

We ought to know that to leave one's self, is nothing else than to quit one's own will, in order to give it to God; for it will avail us little to renounce ourselves, unless we unite ourselves to the divine goodness: to act otherwise, would be to imitate those philosophers who made admirable abandonments of all things and of themselves, but only under some vain pretence of philosophy. Witness Epictetus, who, being a slave by condition, and his master wishing to set him free on account of his great wisdom, would not accept his liberty, one of the greatest blessings, but remained as he was in slavery, so poor, that at his death he left only a lamp, which sold exceedingly dear, having belonged to so great a man.

* "From the largest creatures even to the least, the Providence of God is everywhere apparent; it feeds the little birds who invoke it from the break of day by the melody of their songs, and those flowers whose beauty so quickly fades away, it decks more superbly during the brief moment of their existence, than Solomon was arrayed in all his glory. Can you, O men, whom He has made to His image, whom He has enlightened with His knowledge, whom He has called to His Kingdom, imagine that He forgets you, and that you are the only creatures on which the ever vigilant eyes of His paternal Providence are not opened? Are not you of much more value than they?"—*Bossuet.*

As for us, let us not seek to abandon ourselves, unless to leave ourselves at the disposal of the will of God. There are many, who say to Our Lord: "I give myself entirely to thee, without any reserve;" but there are few, who embrace the practice of this renunciation, which is nothing else than a perfect submission in receiving all kinds of events, according as they happen, by the order of God's Providence, as well affliction as consolation, sickness as health, poverty as riches, contempt as honour, opprobrium as glory.

I speak of the superior part of the soul; for there is no doubt but the inferior part, the natural inclination, tends always more to the side of honour than to that of contempt, to the side of riches rather than to that of poverty, although no one is ignorant that contempt and poverty are more agreeable to God than honour and abundance.*

Let us live as long as God pleases in this valley of tears, with an entire submission to His holy will. I considered the other day what authors write concerning halcyons, little birds that poise on the roadstead of the sea. It is, that they make their nests round, and so closely pressed together, that the water

* "Full of confidence in that vast extensive Providence, which embraces all causes and all effects in its designs, the Christian is replenished with joy, and learns to turn all things to good. If God sends him prosperity, he accepts with submission the present from heaven, and honours that mercy which delights in bestowing favours on the miserable. If adversity, he remembers that 'trial produces hope,' that war is made to secure peace, and that if his virtue conquers, it will one day be crowned. Never does he despair, because he is never without resource; can he despair of his fortunes, to whom there still remains an entire kingdom, and a kingdom no other than that of God? What power can cast him down, who is supported by so sweet a hope."—*Bossuet*.

cannot at all penetrate them, and there is only one little hole in the top by which they can breathe. Within they lodge their little ones, so that the sea surprising them, they float securely on the surface of the waves, without being filled or submerged, and the air entering by the little hole serves so nicely to balance these little chicklings and their little skiffs that they are never capsized. Oh! how I desire that our hearts should be thus closely pressed together, every chink stopped up, so that if the torments and tempests of the world seize upon them, they may not penetrate them, and that there should be only one opening, on the side of heaven, by which to breathe to Our Saviour! And this nest—for what should it serve? For the little fledglings of its Maker, for divine and celestial affections. But while the halcyons are building their nests, and their little ones are yet too tender to endure the shocks of the billows, ah! God has care of them, and looks down on them with pity, preventing the sea from overturning and destroying them. O God! this sovereign goodness will also secure the nest of our hearts, on account of its holy love, against all the assaults of the world, or will preserve us from being assailed by them. Ah, how much I love those birds, which are surrounded by water, live on the air, and see only heaven! They swim like fishes, and sing like birds; and that which pleases me most is, that their anchor is cast on the upper side, and not on the lower, to steady them against the waves. May the sweet Jesus vouchsafe to form us so, that though environed by the world and the flesh, we may live by the spirit; that, in the midst of the vanities of the world, we may always look to heaven; that, dwelling amongst men, we may associate with angels; and that the founda-

tion of our hopes may be on high in paradise. Let holy love be always and everywhere our chief love! Alas, when will it consume our life, and make us die to ourselves, to live only to Our Saviour? To Him alone belong honour, glory, and benediction for ever! Since our inviolable purpose, and invariable resolution, tends continually to the love of God, never are words of the love of God out of place.

I shall say nothing further to you, either on the great abandonment of ourselves and of all things to God, or on the departure from our country and the house of our parents. No, I do not wish to speak of them. May God be pleased to enlighten us, and to show us His good-pleasure; for, at the risk of all that is in us, we shall follow Him into whatever place He leads us. Oh, how good it is to be with Him, no matter where!

I think on the soul of the good thief. Our Lord had said that it would that day be with Him in paradise, and no sooner was it separated from its body than it passed down to hell. Yes, for it would be with Our Lord, as Our Lord descended into hell. It went thither then with Him. O God! what did it think on, while descending and beholding those abysses before its interior eyes? I believe it said with Job: *Who will grant me, O my God, that thou mayest defend and preserve me in hell?* and with David: *No, I shall fear no evil; for the Lord is with me.*

So long as our resolutions live, I shall be untroubled. Though we die, though every thing be overthrown, it matters little, provided they subsist.

The nights are days when God is in our heart, and the days are nights when He is absent.

FOURTH BOOK.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON ETERNITY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN MANNER IN WHICH WE SHOULD MOURN OVER THOSE WHOM WE HAVE LOST.

If we lose our parents and friends, we ought not to be too much distressed; for there is no reason in the world why we should desire those whom we love to remain a long time here, and we ought rather to praise God when He takes them away, than be grieved at it. In the same manner, we must all, one after another, depart, according to the order which has been established; the first who leave, only find themselves the more fortunate, when they have lived with care of their salvation. And then, in eternity, such losses are repaired, and our society, broken up by death, will be restored. This is a very sufficient consolation for the children of God, when their parents and friends have received the efficacious remedies of the holy sacraments, before dying; which they ought always to procure without delay.

Let us keep our hearts in repose and without bitterness; but let us have courage, if there be need, to close the eyes of our dear departed one, giving him the

kiss of peace. After which let us render, without much pomp, the little honours which the Christian custom requires, according to the state and condition of every one. Especially, let us see that the prayers are said, and other pious exercises performed, exactly according to the intention of the deceased, for fear he may have need of some expiation, through the severity of the divine judgment, that he may not be long deprived of the enjoyment of a full and glorious liberty—that his soul may not be imprisoned, through some of God's inscrutable secrets, for a time in purgatory, before being received into the arms of the divine goodness in heaven.

By this last journey, friendships and associations, commenced in this world, are renewed, never more to suffer interruption. In the meantime, let us have patience and wait courageously until the bell for our departure tolls; we shall then go to the place where our friends have already arrived, and since we have cordially loved them, let us continue to love them; let us do, for love of them, that which they wished we should do, and for ourselves, that which they now desire.

However, I am on my guard against saying, "do not weep," for it is very just that you should weep a little, as a testimony to the sincere affection you bear towards the dear departed. This will be to imitate Jesus Christ, who wept a little over Lazarus, His good friend; but it is on condition that those exterior demonstrations should be moderate, and that those sighs and sobs should not be so much tokens of regret as marks of tenderness.

Let us not weep like those, who, altogether attached to this life, consider not that we go to eternity, where, if we shall have lived well in this life, we

shall meet again our dear departed, never more to be separated from them. We are not able to prevent our poor heart from feeling the loss of those, who were here below our amiable companions; but still, we must not break the solemn resolution we have taken, to keep our will inseparably united to that of God, nor cease to say to Divine Providence, "Yes, thou art blessed, for all that which pleases thee is good." I weep on such occasions, and my heart, which is like a stone on heavenly things, pours out tears over such subjects. The imaginary insensibility of those who do not wish us to be men has always appeared to me chimerical; but, at the same time, after we have payed our tribute to the inferior part of the soul, we must do our duty to the superior part, in which is seated, as on a throne, the spirit of faith, which ought to console us in our afflictions, and even by our afflictions. Blessed are they who rejoice in being afflicted, and who thus transform quassia into honey! God be praised! It is always with tranquillity I weep, always with a great sentiment of loving confidence in Divine Providence; for, since Our Lord loved death and delivered it as an object for our love, I cannot wish it ill, for taking away my sisters and others, provided that they die in the love of the holy death of the Saviour. I regard this frail life as such a trifle, that I never turn to God with sweeter sentiments of love, than when He has stricken me or permitted me to be afflicted.

I presume you have so much love and fear of God, that seeing His good-pleasure and His holy will, you accommodate yourself to them, and sweeten your grief by the consideration of the miseries of this world. We cannot prevent ourselves from feeling much regret at separation; and this regret is not forbidden us, provided we moderate it with the hope of not remaining

entirely separated, but consider that in a little time we shall follow our friends to heaven, the place of our repose, God showing us this mercy.

Raise up your eyes often to heaven; and see that this life is only a passage to eternity. Four or five months' absence will soon be over. And if our senses, amused with beholding and prizing this world and its life, make us resent a little too sharply that which is contrary to us, let us often correct this defect by the light of faith, which ought to make us judge those most happy who in the fewest days have finished their voyage.

Oh, how desirable is eternity, at the cost of some miserable vicissitudes !... Everyday my soul grows in love and esteem for eternal things.... Let time flow by, with which we hasten on to be transformed into the glory of the children of God.... How incomparably more amiable is eternity, since its duration is without end, and its days are without nights, and its contentments are without variation !

Oh, if once we had our heart well penetrated with the thought of this holy and blessed eternity: "Go," we should say to our friends, "go, dear friends, to the Supreme Being, at the hour which the King of Eternity has marked; we shall follow after you, and since time is given us only for this purpose, and that the world is peopled only to people heaven, we will do all that we can, to render ourselves worthy of it."

Yes, truly, the journey of our friends to a better life is most amiable, since it happens only to people heaven, and to increase the glory of our King; one day we shall go to rejoin them; and, while awaiting that day, let us carefully learn the canticle of holy love, that we may be able to sing it more perfectly in eternity. Blessed are they who place not their con-

fidence in the present life,—who esteem it only as a plank by which to pass to the celestial life, in which alone we should centre all our hopes !

Let David weep over his Absalom, hanged and lost, but, over the departure of him who has accepted death willingly, who has received the efficacious remedies of the holy Church before dying, there is more occasion to be consoled than afflicted; for, having lived well, he is not dead, but saved from death, since virtuous men do not die, living in heaven by the magnificent recompense of their merits, and on earth by the glorious memory of their good deeds.

Oh, if we could hear the sweet and amiable words of some deceased one now happy, he would say to us: “My dearly beloved, I beseech you to consider that I am in the place which I so much desired, where I am consoled for all my past labours, which have merited for me the glory of immortality. Why do you not console yourselves with me? When I was on earth, you made profession of loving me, and sometimes seeing me succeed happily, you rejoiced and congratulated with me. Ah! am I not always the same person? Why then are you afflicted at my departure, since God has given me so much glory? No, I desire every thing else from you but sorrow and regret. If you have tears, keep them to weep over the miseries of the world, and also over your sins. Do you not know that the evils of the wretched life in which you live, are such, that you ought rather to praise God for having taken me away from them than be dejected? The first who leave it, only find themselves the more fortunate, when they have lived with care of their salvation. No one is esteemed before God for having lived long, but for having lived well. A single anxiety now presses on

me : it is, that you should despise, being in the body, those things of which you shall have no more need when out of the body, and that you so live amid the prosperity of the world, that you may not dread its adversity, assuring yourselves that you shall very soon meet again with your dear departed ones, never more to be separated from them through all eternity."

Would to God that all the children of Adam reflected attentively on these beautiful truths! Certainly they would not be so ardent or so eager after pleasures and vanities; for they would see clearly that all they have esteemed until the present is nothing but nothingness, the wages of death, the lure of Satan, the bait of hell, and by means of this clear knowledge, united with a firm and determined resolution, they would draw from temporal death, help and succour to avoid the eternal.

It is related that Alexander the Great, sailing on the high seas, first and of himself, discovered Arabia Felix, by the odour of the aromatical woods which grew there; and thus formed the desire of conquering the country. In like manner, those who seek the eternal country, though sailing on the high seas of worldly business, have a certain foretaste of heaven, which wonderfully animates and encourages them; but it is necessary to stand at the bows, and to turn towards that side.

CHAPTER II.

TO A POOR MOTHER, ON THE DEATH OF HER CHILD IN
INFANCY.

BEHOLD, my dear daughter, your son is secure; he possesses the everlasting crown. Behold him escaped,

and preserved from the risk of being lost, to which we see so many persons exposed. Tell me, might he not with age have become a debauchee? Might you not have received much grief from him, if he had lived, as so many other mothers have received from their children? For, my daughter, we often receive it from those from whom we least expect it. And now, God has drawn him away from all these dangers, making him gather the fruits of victory without battle, and reap the harvest of glory without labour.

In your own opinion, my dear daughter, are not your vows and your devotions well recompensed? You made them for him, but that he might remain with you in this valley of tears. Our Lord, who understands best what is good for us, has heard your prayers in favour of the child for whom you offered them, but at the expense of the temporal contentments which you sought.

In truth, I approve very much of the confession you make, that it is on account of your sins this child has been taken away, for this proceeds from humility; but still, I do not believe that it is grounded on truth. No, my dear daughter, it is not to chastise you, but to favour this child, that God has saved it so soon. At the close of our days, when our eyes are opened, we shall see that this life is so little a thing, that we need not regret those who lose it first; the shortest is about the best, provided it conducts to the eternal.

But come, behold your little child in heaven, among the angels and the Holy Innocents. It knows the pleasure you took in caring for it, during the brief time you had it in charge, and, above all, the devotions you practised for it; in return, it prays to God for you, and sends up a thousand good wishes

for your life, that it may be made more and more conformable to the celestial will, and that you may thus gain the happiness which it enjoys. Remain in peace, my dearest daughter, and keep your heart in heaven, where you possess this brave little saint. Persevere in desiring always to love more and more faithfully the supreme will.*

Oh, how happy for this child to have flown away to heaven like a little angel, almost before having touched the earth! What a pledge you have on high, my dearest daughter! But I am sure you have treated heart to heart with Our Saviour on this affair, and that He has already soothed the natural tenderness of your mother's love, and that you have many times pronounced, with all your heart, the filial protestation which Our Lord has taught us: *Yea, Eternal Father, for so it hath pleased thee, and it is good that it should be so.*

O my daughter, if you have done this, you are happily dead with your child in Our Divine Saviour, *and your life is hidden with him in God; and when He will appear, who is your life, you also shall appear with him in glory.* This is the mode of speaking, adopted by the Holy Ghost in Scripture.

We suffer, we die with those whom we love, by the affection that binds us to them; and when they suffer and die in Our Lord, and we acquiesce by patience in their sufferings and demise, for love of

* "I beseech you to unite your sorrow with that of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, when they lost their dearest Child; and remember that Our Lord, on his side, sacrificed the most reasonable feelings of the holiest and most affectionate youth in the world, because He looked to the interests of His Father, which He preferred to the sentiments and tenderesses of human nature."—*Olier.*

Him who, for love of us, was pleased to suffer and to die, we suffer and die with them: all these pains amassed, my dearest daughter, are inestimable spiritual riches, as we shall one day know, when, for light labours, we shall behold eternal recompenses.

Employ the greatness of your courage to moderate the greatness of the grief which the greatness of your loss has occasioned you. Let us sweetly acquiesce in the decrees of Providence, which are always just, always holy, always adorable, though dark and impenetrable to us.

CHAPTER III.

TO A FATHER, ON THE DEATH OF HIS SON.

You have considered well that this dear child belonged to God more than to you, who held him only in trust from the sovereign liberality. And if Providence has judged that it was time to withdraw him, we must believe that it has acted thus for his good, in which so fond a father as you takes such delight. Our life is not so pleasant that those who escape from it need be much lamented. It appears to me that this son has gained much for himself, by leaving the world almost before he had arrived in it.*

* "Why do we weep over those who weep no more, whose tears God has for ever wiped away? It is over ourselves we ought to weep, and from ourselves extend this compassion to humanity in general. Faith assures us that we shall soon be re-united with those whom our senses represent to us as lost. Live by faith, without listening to flesh and blood. In our common centre, which is the bosom of God, you will again find the person who has disappeared from your eyes."—*Fenelon.*

The name of death is terrible, as it is usually proposed to us, for some one says: "Your dear father is dead," or "your son is dead." This is not well spoken among Christians. We should say, "Your son or your father is gone to his country and to yours; and because necessity required it, he passed by the way of death, in which he lingered not." I certainly do not know how we can regard as our country this world, in which we remain for so short a time, compared with heaven, in which we shall dwell for ever. Let us go forward then, and be more assured of the presence of our dear friends who are above, than of those who are here below; for, these allow us to go, and delay as long as they can after us, and if they go like us, it is against their choice.

And if any remains of sadness still weigh down your mind for the departure of this sweet soul, cast yourself on your knees before the heart of our crucified Saviour, and ask His assistance. He will give it to you, and will inspire you with the thought and the resolution to prepare yourself well to make in your turn, at the appointed hour, the same passage, by which you may happily arrive at the place where we ought to hope our poor but blessed deceased is now safely lodged.

CHAPTER IV.

TO A MOTHER, ON THE DEATH OF HER SON KILLED IN WAR.

How much is my soul in pain for your heart, my dearest mother! For I seem to see this poor maternal heart, all filled with an excessive anguish; an anguish, yet, which we cannot blame, or consider

strange, if we remember how amiable was this son, whose second removal from among us is now the subject of our affliction.

My dearest mother, it is true, this dear son was one of the most amiable that ever lived; all who knew him knew it, and acknowledged it. But is not this a great part of the consolation we ought now to feel, my dearest mother? For, in truth, it seems to me, that those whose lives are worthy of memory and esteem, live even after their departure; since we take so much pleasure in calling them to mind, and representing them to the minds of those who still remain.

He is gone from this world into that which is the most desirable of all, and to which we must all go, every one in his season, and where you will see him sooner than you would perhaps have seen him, if he had remained in this New World amid the fatigues of conquest, which he undertook for his king and for the Church.

In a word, he has ended his mortal days in his duty, and in the obligations of his word. This kind of end is excellent, and we should not doubt but that the great God has rendered it happy, as He continually favoured him, from the cradle, with His grace to live in a most Christian manner.

We should enter into the designs of the admirable providence of God, and rest in its ordinances, with a holy confidence, that it does all things for the best, and perhaps has purified this good soul here by the fire of war, to save it from that of purgatory.

In short, we may allow afflictions to enter our hearts, but we must not allow them to take up their residence there. God, your good angel, and the wisdom you have acquired by long experience,

will suggest these thoughts better to you than any thing I could say.

Behold yourself now divested and deprived of the most beautiful garment you ever wore. Bless the name of God who gave it, and who has taken it away; and His Divine Majesty will hold the place of children to you.

Be consoled, my dearest mother, and let your mind be solaced, adoring the Divine Providence, which does all things most sweetly; and, though the motives of its decrees are hidden, yet the certainty of its benignity is manifest, and obliges us to believe that it does every thing in perfect goodness. I would willingly say to you, as a remedy for your sorrow, that he who would exempt his heart from the ills of earth, must conceal it in heaven; and, as David says, *we must hide our soul in the secret of God's countenance, and in the depth of his holy tabernacle.* Look well to eternity, to which you tend. You will find that whatever does not refer to that unending duration should not affect your courage. This dear son has passed from one world to another, under good auspices, in the fulfilment of his duty towards God and the king; no longer look upon this journey but in the light of eternity.

Let us not be grieved, my daughter, we shall soon be all re-united. We advance continually, and draw near to that country where our departed ones are, and, in two or three moments, we shall arrive there. Place your heart, I beg of you, my dearest daughter, at the foot of the cross, and accept the death and the life of all those whom you love, for love of Him who gave His life and received His death for you.

You are almost ready to start to the place where this amiable child now dwells; but, while awaiting

the hour of setting sail, calm your maternal heart, by the consideration of that holy eternity to which he has gone, and to which you are going. Though you cannot write to him sometimes as you would wish, you can speak to God for him, and he will immediately know all that you would wish him to know, and will receive all the assistance which you may render to him, by devotions and good works, as soon as you will have performed and delivered them into the hands of His Divine Majesty.

Repress your too eager desire to know where this dear deceased one now is, in the other life; and, when you find your mind engaged on this pursuit, you should instantly turn it to Our Lord, with these or the like words: "O Lord, how sweet is Thy Providence, and how good is Thy mercy! Oh, how happy for this dear child to have fallen into Thy paternal arms, where he cannot but be safe, in whatever place he is!"

Yes, for it is necessary to guard against thinking of any other place than paradise or purgatory, since, thanks be to God! there is no reason for thinking otherwise. Withdraw then your mind thus, and employ it in acts of love towards our crucified Lord.

When you recommend this child to the Divine Majesty, say simply: "O Lord, I recommend to Thee the child of my bowels, but much more the child of the bowels of Thy mercy, formed of my blood, but redeemed by Thine."

CHAPTER V.

TO A LADY, ON THE DEATH OF HER FATHER.

BUT now, my very dear daughter, it is necessary that your heart should henceforward endure the absence of your good father, since Divine Providence has been pleased at length to draw him out of this miserable mortal life, in which we live dying, and continually die living.

As for me, my daughter, I do not wish to present you with any other consolation than that of Jesus Christ crucified, at the sight of whom, your faith will console you; for, after the death of Our Saviour, every death is happy to those, who, like the deceased of whom I speak, die within the pale and with the assistance of Holy Church; and whoever glories in the death of Our Lord will never be afflicted at the death of those whom He has redeemed, and received as His own.*

I am accustomed to say to all the souls who address themselves to me, that we must lift up our hearts on high, as the Church says, during the holy sacrifice. Live then with great and generous thoughts, attached to that holy Providence, which disposes of mortal moments only in order to eternal life.

The heart thus nobly lifted up is always humble,

* "While depriving you of creatures, the Lord wishes that His dear Son should hold the place of all persons and things to you. It is at this hour that He will increase His love in you, and make you feel that He wishes to be your father, as well as your spouse and faithful friend; in a word, that He wishes to be all things to you. Herein appears the holy jealousy of Jesus, incomparable in love."—*Olier*.

for it is established on truth, and not on vanity; it is sweet and peaceful, for it makes no account of that which might trouble it. But when I say that it is sweet and peaceful, I do not mean to say that it has no sorrows or sentiments of affliction. No, indeed, my dear daughter, I do not say that; but, I say that sufferings, pains, tribulations, are all accompanied with such a strong resolution to endure them for God, that their bitterness, however bitter it may be, is received in peace and tranquillity.

As for the rest, this grievous separation is so much the less hard, as it will continue for the less time, and we not only expect, but we aspire to that happy repose in which this beautiful soul is now, or will soon be, lodged; let us accept, I beseech you, agreeably the little delay we must make here below, and, instead of multiplying tears over ourselves, offer them for it, to Our Lord, that He may be pleased to hasten its reception into the arms of His divine goodness, if He has not already granted it this grace.*

* "It is God, as the Apostle says, who consoles the afflicted and the humbled, and supports them through all their desolations. What a happiness that everything in Christianity binds us to God, and that nothing happens to the children of this Father, which does not render them His by a new title! The condition of an orphan must make you more dependent on God, more retired into Him, and more separated from all else, and establish you in a greater confidence towards Him, and in a more perfect spirit of abandonment. Let the eternal bosom of God be now your abode, your repose, your comfort, your strength, your counsel, your light, your love, your life, your all, and let it begin to be to you on earth what it will be to you for an eternity in heaven. Losing the image you will find the reality; and this Divine Father, from whom proceeds all paternity, in heaven and on earth, will be all things to you, as He is to His Son, and to His well-beloved daughter,

CHAPTER VI.

TO A LADY, ON THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND.

MY God! how frail is this life, and how fleeting are its consolations! One moment they appear, and the next they are gone; and, if it were not for the holy eternity to which all our days tend, we should have much reason indeed to mourn over our human condition.

The thoughts of men are vain and useless, to comfort a heart so much afflicted as yours. God alone is the master and consoler of hearts. He alone calms souls of good will, that is to say, those who hope in Him.

The interior words spoken by God to the afflicted heart, which has recourse to His goodness, are sweeter than honey, and more salutary than the most precious balm.

The heart that is united to the heart of God cannot be prevented from loving, and accepting lovingly, the arrows which His hand shoots at it.

For so a long time you have served God, and studied in the school of His cross, that you ought to accept this cross, not only patiently, but sweetly and affectionately, in consideration of Him who bore His, and was borne upon it, even to death, and of her who, having only one Son, but a Son of incomparable love, saw Him die on the cross, with eyes full of tears and a heart full of sorrow, yet a sweet

I mean Jesus and Mary, from whom I conjure you to be inseparable, and in whose society, to seek refuge, when creatures besiege and attack you."—*Olier*.

sorrow, in favour of our salvation, and that of the whole world.

Now, the sovereign goodness will undoubtedly incline towards you, and come into your heart to aid you in this tribulation, if you cast yourself into its arms, and resign yourself into its paternal hands.

God gave you this husband; He has taken him away, withdrawing him to Himself. He is obliged to be favourable to you in your afflictions.

All things considered, we must accommodate our hearts to the condition of the present life. It is a perishable life, and death, which rules over it, observes no regular order; sometimes taking here, sometimes there, without any preference or method, the good among the bad, and the young among the old.

Oh, how blessed are they who, living in continual mistrust of death, are always ready to die, that so they may be able to live for ever in that life, where there is no more death!

Assuredly, my dear lady, the greatest desire your husband had at his departure, was, that you should not languish long in the regret, which his absence would cause you, but that you should endeavour to moderate, for love of him, the affection which his love gave you; and now, in the happiness which he enjoys, or which he confidently awaits, he wishes you a holy consolation, and that, assuaging your tribulation, you should preserve your eyes for some better employment than that of tears, and your mind for some more desirable occupation than that of sadness.

And since true friendship makes us rejoice in the just satisfaction of our friend, I beg of you, to please your husband, console yourself, solace your mind,

and raise your courage. And, if the counsel I give you with the utmost sincerity, is agreeable to you, practise it, prostrating yourself before Our Lord, acquiescing in His appointments, considering the soul of this dear deceased as desiring for yours a true and Christian fortitude, abandoning yourself entirely to the celestial vigilance of the Saviour of your soul, your Protector, who will aid and succour you, and at length restore you to your departed one, not as a wife to her husband, but as an heir of heaven to a co-heir.

Little by little, God severs us from the contentments of this world; we must, then, more ardently aspire after those of immortality, and keep our hearts lifted up to heaven, where our expectations are settled, and where we have already a great many of the friends we love. May the name of Our Lord be for ever blessed, and may His love ever live and reign in the midst of our hearts!

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE DEATH OF A BROTHER.

MY dear brother (for I am in the place of him, whom our good God has taken to be near Himself), I am told that you weep continually for this truly sensible separation. There is no necessity that this should be so; either you weep for him, or for yourself: if for him, why weep, since our brother is in paradise, where tears are unknown? if for yourself, is there not self-love in it?

I speak freely with you, inasmuch as one would suppose you loved your own more than his happiness,

which is beyond conception. And would you wish, that, on your account, he should not be with Him, *who gives us life, motion, and being*, us, especially, who acquiesce in His holy pleasure and divine will?

But come to see us, and frequently, and we shall change tears into joy, remembering together that in which our good brother rejoices, and which will never be taken away from him; and, in fine, think often thus thereon and on him, and you will live joyful, as I desire for you with all my heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE DEATH OF A FATHER.

O MY dearest daughter, what can I say to you on this departure? I doubt not but God has care of your heart, in these occurrences, and that if He wounds with one hand, He applies His balm with the other: *he strikes and heals, he kills and makes alive*; and so long as we can lift up our eyes, and behold the celestial Providence, anguish cannot overwhelm us. But enough, my dearest daughter; God and your good angel having consoled you, I shall not put my hand to it: *your most bitter bitterness is in peace*. What need is there for still speaking of it? In proportion as God draws to Himself, piece after piece, the treasures which our heart had collected here below, that is to say, those whom we loved, He draws our heart itself thither too. *And since I have no longer a father*, said St. Francis, *I shall say more freely: Our Father, who art in heaven*. My dearest daughter, often extend your views even to heaven.

We are wrong if we regard our parents, our friends, our contentments, as objects on which we can establish our hearts. Are we, I ask you, in this world on any other conditions than those of the rest of men, or than those of the perpetual inconstancy in which every thing has been established? We must repose our intentions on the holy eternity to which we aspire. O peace of the human heart! nowhere to be found but in glory and on the cross of Jesus Christ! Live thus; and often rejoice your heart with the confident expectation of enjoying for ever a blessed and immutable immortality.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW MUCH THE THOUGHT OF HEAVEN OUGHT TO CONSOLE US.

THE end of man is the clear vision and enjoyment of God, which he hopes to obtain in heaven. Blessed then is he who employs this short mortal life to acquire an eternal good, referring the transitory days here below to the day of immortality, and applying all the perishable moments, which remain to him, to gain a holy eternity. The true light of heaven will not fail to show him the secure course, and to conduct him happily into the harbour of everlasting felicity.*

* "My son, lift up your eyes to heaven to see your reward," cried out the heroic mother of young Symphorian, expiring in the midst of the most cruel torments. There is no pain that the sight of heaven does not sweeten, no sorrow that it does not soothe, no tears that it does not wipe away, no murmurs that it does not appease. There is nothing so bitter but it becomes sweet in the hope of eternal goods.

The rivers flow incessantly, and as the Wise Man says, return to the sea, which is the place of their nativity, and is also their last resting-place; all their motion tends only to unite them with their original source. "O God," says St. Augustine, "Thou hast created my heart for Thyself, and never can it find repose but in Thee." *What have I in heaven, and what do I desire on earth, but thee, my God? Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Behold in detail a few points which we have to believe on this subject:—

Firstly, there is a paradise, a place of eternal glory, a most perfect state, in which all goods are assembled, and where there is no evil; a world of wonders, replete with felicity, incomparable in happiness, infinitely surpassing every expectation; the house of God and the palace of the blessed; a most lovely and desirable city; and so precious that all the beauties of the world put together are nothing in comparison with its excellence: so that no one can conceive the infinite greatness of the abysses of its delights.

Consider that, for an eternity, the fortunate souls there will enjoy the happiness of seeing God give Himself all to all, and hearing the eternal Son say benignly to His Father: *My Father I wish that those whom thou hast given me may be eternally with me, and that they may see the glory which I have had from thee*

The Apostle St. Paul himself often thought on this glorious recompense, to find encouragement in the midst of the tribulations which pressed upon him from every side. "The time of my deliverance draws nigh," he said to one of his disciples; "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, it only remains for me to await the crown which is reserved for me, which the Lord, as a just judge, will render me on the great day."

before the creation of the world; and turning to His dear children: Did I not tell you that whoever would love me, would be loved by my Father, and that we would manifest ourselves to him? Then this holy company, inundated with pleasure in the bosom of the Divinity, will sing the eternal *alleluia* of joy and praise to its Creator.

Secondly, the soul, purified from all sin, entering heaven, will that instant behold God Himself, unveiled, face to face, as He is: contemplating, by a view of true and real presence, the proper divine essence, and in it infinite beauties.

The sweet St. Bernard, while yet young, being at Chatillon-sur-Seine, on Christmas night, waited in the church until the commencement of the divine office; as the poor child waited, he fell into a light slumber, during which (O my God, what a happiness!) he saw in spirit, and the vision was quite clear and distinct, how the Son of God, having espoused human nature, and become a little infant in the bowels of His mother, was, with an humble gentleness and a celestial majesty, virginally born of her sacred womb; a vision which so filled his heart with jubilation, that all his life he had a tender recollection of it, and the thought of the mystery of the nativity of his Master, always brought him spiritual joy and extraordinary consolation.

Alas! if an unsubstantial vision of the temporal birth of the Son of God so powerfully ravished and delighted the heart of a child, what will it be when our minds, gloriously illumined by the blessed light of glory, will see that eternal birth, by which the Son proceeds, true God of true God, divinely and eternally born of the Father? Then will the soul be deified, filled with God, and made like to God.

by an eternal and immutable participation of God, uniting Himself to it as fire does to the iron which it penetrates, communicating its light, brilliancy, heat, and other qualities, in such a manner that both seem one and the same fire.

As God has given us the light of reason, by which we can know Him as the author of nature, and the light of faith, by which we consider Him as the source of grace, so He will give us the light of glory, by which we shall contemplate Him as the fountain of beatitude and life eternal, yet a fountain that we shall not contemplate from afar, as we now do by the light of faith, but a fountain that we shall see by the light of glory, plunged and lost in it.

Thirdly, the soul will be happy for ever amid the nobility and variety of the citizens and inhabitants of that blessed country, with its millions of millions of angels, of cherubim, of seraphim, its troop of apostles, of martyrs, of confessors, of virgins, of holy women, whose number is without number! Oh, how happy is this company! The least of the blessed is more beautiful to behold than the whole world. What will it be to see them all? They sing the sweet canticle of eternal love, they ever rejoice in an unceasing gladness, they interchange unspeakable contentments, and they live in the consolations of a happy and indissoluble society.

But, O God! if sincere human friendship is so agreeable, what will it be to behold the reciprocal love of the blessed? Certainly, the hearts of the citizens of heaven will be abyssed in love, through admiration of the beauty and sweetness of such a love!

Fourthly, in paradise, God will give Himself all to all, and not in parts, since He is a whole which has no parts; but still, He will give Him-

self variously, and with as many differences, as there will be blessed guests. As star differs from star in brightness, so men will be different, one from the other, in glory, in proportion as they will have been different in graces and merits; and as there are probably no two men equal in charity in this world, so there will probably be no two equal in glory in the next.

Consider how delightful it must be to see that city where the great King sits on the throne of His Majesty, surrounded by all His blessed servants; there are found the choirs of angels, and the company of celestial men; there are found the venerable troop of the prophets, the chosen number of the apostles, the victorious army of innumerable martyrs, the august rank of pontiffs, the sacred flock of confessors, the true and perfect religious, the holy women, the humble widows, the pure virgins. The glory of every one is not equal, but nevertheless they all taste one and the same pleasure, for there is the reign of full and perfect charity.

One ray of glory, one drop of the love of the blessed, is of more value, has more efficacy, and merits more esteem, than all other kinds of knowledge and love which ever could enter into the hearts of mortal men.

Fifthly, notwithstanding the variety and diversity of glory, yet each blessed soul, contemplating the infinite beauty of God, and the abyss of infinity that remains to be seen in this same beauty, feels perfectly satisfied and satiated, and is content with the glory it enjoys, according to the rank it holds in heaven, on account of the most amiable Divine Providence, which has so arranged every thing.

What a joy to be environed on all sides with incredible pleasures, and, as a most happy bird, to

fly and sing for ever in the air of the Divinity! What a favour, after a million of languors, pains, and fatigues, endured in this mortal life, after endless desires for the eternal truth, never fully satisfied in this world, to see one's self in the haven of all tranquillity, and to have at length reached the living and mighty source of the fresh waters of undying life, which alone can extinguish the passions, and satiate the human heart.*

We ought always to have the eternal days in our mind; and, in consideration of them, nothing will appear impossible. Did not David say, "Because of the words of thy mouth, I have walked in hard and difficult ways?" And what are the words of the lips of Our Lord, if not the words of eternal life? St. Peter had reason to say: "To whom, O Lord, shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

This is that eternal life, to which Our Lord in Genesis wished to move Cain, when He said to him: "If thou do well, shalt thou not receive recompense?" This is that eternal life, for which the good man Jacob called himself a pilgrim. "The days," he answered King Pharaoh, "of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years, few, and evil, and they are not come up to the days of the pilgrimage of my fathers." "I am mindful of the ancient days,

* "The predestined are more happy in heaven than the reprobate are miserable in hell, God being more generous in rewarding than severe in punishing. In its effects, mercy every way surpasses justice. Yes, the joy of the blessed in heaven is immense, and this is precisely what rendered the realization of the rich man's desire impossible, when he asked for one drop of water from heaven to be laid on his tongue by Lazarus. A single drop of the celestial joy falling into the abode of the reprobate, would suffice to extinguish its flames, and to convert into sweetness all its bitterness."—*Ventura*.

and I have in my thoughts the eternal years." Eternal life, when well considered, is sufficient to move the hardest hearts.

In the beginning, during the first fervour of the Order of St. Dominic, there was a preacher, named Reginald, who preached at Bologne with incredible fruit. There was, in the city, a learned and rich man, who, for fear of being converted, would not attend a single sermon, though others flocked in crowds. At length, however, he ventured on St. Stephen's day, and, hearing a discourse on the words: "I see the heavens opened," he was converted, and became a religious.

For eternal life, David inclined his will and heart to observe the commandments of God; St. Augustine wished to retire among his religious, before being made bishop; St. John the Baptist dwelt in the desert.

CHAPTER X.

HOW AGREEABLE IT WILL BE TO PARENTS AND FRIENDS TO MEET AGAIN AND CONVERSE TOGETHER IN HEAVEN.

ALL the blessed know one another in heaven, and by their names, as the Gospel gives us to understand, since in the little specimen of it which Our Lord was pleased to show on Thabor to His apostles, He wished that they should know Moses and Elias, whom they had never seen before.

But if it is thus, what contentment shall we receive in meeting again with those whom we have so dearly loved in this life, where we shall even know the new Christians who are now being converted to the faith

in the Indies, in Japan, at the Antipodes! And holy friendships, commenced for God in this life, will be continued in the next for ever.

We shall love particular persons, but these particular friendships will not give rise to particularities; for all our friendships will take their origin in the charity of God, who, guiding them all, will dispose that we shall love every blessed soul with that pure love with which we ourselves shall be loved by the divine goodness.

O God, what consolation shall we derive from the celestial conversation that we shall hold one with another! There, our good angels will afford us a consolation greater than can be told or conceived, when they will introduce themselves to us, and represent to us so lovingly the care they had of our salvation during the course of our mortal life, reminding us of the holy inspirations which they brought us, as a sacred milk which they had drawn from the bosom of the divine beauty, to gain us to the pursuit of those divine sweetnesses in which we shall then rejoice. "Do you not remember," they will say to us, "such an inspiration that I brought you at such a time, reading such a book, listening to such a sermon, looking on such an image, as happened to St. Mary of Egypt, an inspiration that incited you to be converted to Our Lord, and was the ground of your predestination?" O God, will not our hearts be then plunged in unutterable happiness?

But, besides, every one of the blessed will have a particular intercourse with the others, according to his rank and dignity. St. Augustine expressed a wish one day that he could see Rome exulting in a glorious triumph, St. Paul preaching, or Our Lord

conversing among the people, healing the sick, and performing various miracles. O God, what consolation for this great saint, to see the celestial Jerusalem rejoicing in its divine triumph, and the great apostle St. Paul intoning with wondrous melody those praises which he will for ever sing to the Divine Majesty in heaven! But what an excess of consolation for St. Augustine, to see the perpetual miracle of the felicity of the blessed, performed by Our Lord, having raised us from the dead! Imagine the pleasant conversation which these two saints will have with each other, St. Paul saying to St. Augustine: "My dear brother, do you not remember that, while reading my epistle, you were touched with such an inspiration, which solicited you to be converted, an inspiration which I had obtained from the mercy of our good God, by the prayers I made for you at the same time when you were reading what I had written?" Will not the heart of this holy father be then inundated with ineffable sweetness?

O God, what a consolation shall we receive, being in heaven, when we shall see the blessed face of Our Lady, all inflamed with the love of God! And if St. Elizabeth was transported with joy and delight, when, one day being visited by her, she heard Our Lady intone the sacred canticle: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, how much more will our minds and hearts thrill with unspeakable rapture when we shall hear intoned, by this divine *cantatrice*, the beautiful songs of everlasting love!

O God, what sweet melody! Undoubtedly we shall faint away in inconceivable joys.

But, you will say to me, since we shall conversé with all those who will be in the heavenly Jerusalem,

what shall we say? Of what shall we speak? What will be the subject of our intercourse? O God, what the subject! It will be of the mercy of God to us here below, by which He rendered us capable of entering into the enjoyment of a blessed felicity, in which the soul will have nothing more to desire; for, under the name of felicity, are comprised all kinds of goods, which, yet, are one only good, consisting in the enjoyment of God.

But again, of what shall we treat in our conversation? Of the death and passion of Our Lord. Do we not learn it in the Transfiguration, where He speaks of nothing so much as of the excess He should accomplish in Jerusalem, an excess no other than the death of this divine Saviour? Oh, if we could comprehend what a consolation the blessed feel in speaking of this death, how much our souls would delight in thinking of it!

Let us pass still further, I pray you, and say something of the honour we shall have in speaking to Our Lord Himself. Oh, here indeed our felicity will take an amazing increase. What shall we do, dear souls, what will become of us, I ask you, when we shall see the most adorable and amiable heart of Our Divine Master, through the sacred wound of His side, all burning with the love He bears us, a heart in which we shall see our names written in letters of love? Oh, is it possible, we shall then say to Our Divine Saviour, that Thou hast loved us so much as to engrave our very names on Thy heart and Thy hands? Still it is most true. The prophet Isaias, speaking in the person of Our Lord, says: "Though a mother should forget the child which she has borne in her womb, yet I will never forget thee, for I have engraven thy name on

my hands." But Our Lord, improving on these words, will say to us: "Not only have I engraven thy name on my hands, but also on my heart." A subject, indeed, of the greatest consolation, to see that we are so dearly beloved by Our Lord, and that He always carries us in His heart! Oh, what wonderful delight for every one of the blessed spirits, when they will see in this most sacred and adorable heart, the thoughts of peace which He had for them, even at the hour of His passion, thoughts by which He prepared for us not only the principal means of our salvation, but also in particular, with admirable goodness, all the divine attractions and holy inspirations by which this sweetest Saviour would draw us to His love! Will not this sight, this consideration, which we shall make on the sacred love of our sovereign Master, by whom we have been so fondly and so ardently loved, inflame our hearts with unparalleled love and affection? What ought we not to do, in order to enjoy such exquisite and ineffable happiness?

If during this mortal life, when we hear that which we love spoken of, we find so much contentment that we can scarcely cease from thinking of it, what joy and what jubilation shall we feel, when we hear resounding, through the courts of heaven, the loud praises of the Divine Majesty, whom we ought to love and shall then love more than it is possible for us to express or comprehend? And if, during this life, we take so much pleasure in the mere thought of eternal felicity, how much more pleasure shall we feel in the enjoyment of this same felicity a felicity, which will never have an end, a glory which will continue for ever, without the possibility of our being ejected from it? Oh, how

much this security will increase our bliss and our consolation!

Let us then walk gaily and joyously amid the difficulties of this transitory life; let us, with open arms, embrace mortifications, pains, and afflictions, if we meet them on our way, since we are assured that these pains will have an end, and that they will terminate with our life, after which there will be nothing more left but joy and everlasting contentments and consolations.

Believe me, to live content during this pilgrimage, we must keep before our eyes the hope of arriving safely in our country, where we shall abide for ever, and in the mean time steadfastly hope; for it is true that God, who calls us to Himself, regards us as we advance, and will never permit anything to happen to us, unless it be for our greater good; He knows what we are, and will keep His paternal hand over us, that nothing may arrest our course.

My God, what consolation I feel in the expectation of beholding us all united in the will of loving and praising God! Let Divine Providence conduct us wherever it pleases; I have a firm hope and assurance, that we shall reach the end safely. God be praised! I have this confidence. Let us be joyous in the service of the Divine Majesty; let us be joyous without thoughtlessness, and confident without ignorance.

CHAPTER XI.

WE SHOULD HOPE TO GO TO HEAVEN.*

AND if these goods are true, why, O worldlings, do you turn aside from this glorious residence? why do you abandon the sovereign happiness? Ah, would it not be better to aspire after a day of delicious peace, to retrace your steps towards the path of virtue, to seek an eternal repose, to travel towards the Holy Land that has been promised you, than to wallow in the mire of sin, and to live in the dark atmosphere of the society of the wicked?

The whole world invites you to paradise: your good angel presses you with all his strength, offering you on God's part a thousand helps, a thousand graces; Jesus Christ, from the summit of heaven, looks down lovingly upon you, and sweetly invites you to the throne of glory, which He has prepared for you in the abundance of His mercy; the Blessed Virgin urges you maternally; the saints, millions of

* Have confidence through all your trials; forget not that the leaves must fall before the tree becomes green again, that the grain of seed must die in the bosom of the earth before flourishing again above its surface. Yet a few days of patient sorrow, and our transformed mortality will be clothed with immortality, and this corruption will be changed into incorruptible light; and, united with the saints in the place of refreshment and peace, where grief and lamentation are unknown, you will say with them: No, the sufferings of that short time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which has been revealed in us; that fleeting moment, that little portion of tribulation which fell to us, does not equal the eternal weight, the immense measure of happiness which is its fruit and recompense.

holy souls, exhort you affectionately, and assure you that the way of virtue is not so difficult as the world says it is; will you not accept the favours of heaven? Will you not correspond with the attractions and inspirations that are presented to you?

O h, how often we ought, at least on great Feasts, to keep our minds fixed on the heavenly Jerusalem, the glorious city of God, where we shall hear His praises ringing from the sweet voices of an endless multitude of saints; and, inquiring of them how they arrived there, we shall learn that the apostles went chiefly by love, the martyrs by constancy, the doctors by meditation, the confessors by mortification, the virgins by purity of body and soul, and all in general by humility.

God would not have given us souls capable of contemplating and desiring this holy eternity, if He had not intended to bestow on us the means of obtaining it. Hence, then, let our hearts be filled with a sweet confidence, and let us say: We shall do sufficient; no, not we, but the grace of God with us. The more powerful and pressing this desire will be in us, the more enjoyment and contentment will its fulfilment one day bring us.

God be praised! I have this firm confidence in the depth of my heart, that we shall live for ever with God; we shall one day be all together in heaven; we must take courage; we shall soon be there. And what would Our Lord do with His eternal life, if He would not bestow it on poor and contemptible creatures like us, who have no hope but in His sovereign goodness? O my God, what a consolation I find in the assurance that my heart will be eternally abysed in the love of the Heart of Jesus! Let Providence conduct us whithersoever it pleases:—what matter?—we shall arrive safely in the harbour.

ADIEU

OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES TO THE PIOUS READER.

It is with all my heart, I say the word, "adieu." To God (A Dieu) may you ever belong in this mortal life, serving Him faithfully in the midst of the pains we all have in carrying our crosses, and in the immortal life, blessing Him eternally with all the celestial court. The greater good of our souls is to be with God, and the greatest good, to be with God alone.

He who is with God alone is never sad, unless for having offended God, and his sadness then consists in a profound but tranquil and peaceful humility and submission, after which he rises again in the divine goodness, by a sweet and perfect confidence, without chagrin or vexation.

He who is with God alone seeks only God; and because God is no less in tribulation than in prosperity, he remains in peace during times of adversity.

He who is with God alone thinks often of Him in the midst of the occupations of this life.

He who is with God alone would be glad that every one should know he wishes to serve God, and to be engaged in exercises suitable to keep him united to God.

Live then entirely to God; desire only to please Him, and to please creatures only in Him, and for Him. What greater blessing can I wish you? Thus, then, by this continual wish I make for your soul, I say adieu.

To God let us belong, without end, without reserve, without measure, as He is ours for ever. May we always unite our little crosses with His great one!

To God let us live, and to God without anything more, since out of Him, and without Him, we seek for nothing: no, not even for ourselves, who, indeed, out of Him, and without Him, are only true nothings.

Adieu. I desire for you the abundance of divine love, which is and will be for ever the only good of our hearts, given to us only for Him, who has given His Heart entirely to us.

Let Jesus be our crown! Let Mary be our hope! I am, in the name of the Son and the Mother,
Sincerely yours,

FRANCIS DE SALES.

SUPPLEMENT.

I.—WE SHOULD NOT DESPAIR OF THE SALVATION OF ANY SINNER.*

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, says the Bishop of Belley, never wished that the repentance of any sinner should be despaired of before his last breath, observing that this life was the way of our pilgrimage, in which those who walked might fall, and those who fell might, by grace, rise again, and, like the giants in the fable, they sometimes rose stronger than they had fallen, grace superabounding where sin had abounded.

He went still further; for, even after death, he did not wish that any one should pass a bad judgment on those who had led a bad life, unless it regarded those of whose damnation we are assured by the truth of the Holy Scripture. Beyond this point, He would not allow any one to seek to penetrate into the secrets of God, which are reserved to His wisdom.

His principal reason was, that, as the first grace of justification does not fall under the merit of any preceding work, so the last grace, which is that of final perseverance, is not given to any merit either. Besides, who has known the mind of the Lord, and who has been His counsellor? For this reason, He wished that, even after the last breath, we should hope

* We take this chapter from the *Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, by Camus.

well of the deceased person, however sad an end he might have seemed to make, because we can only form very uncertain conjectures, founded on external appearances, in which the most experienced are often deceived.*

II.—SENTIMENTS OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES ON THE NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

THE extreme gentleness of St. Francis de Sales, says the Bishop of Belley, from whom we borrow this chapter, always led him to the mildest opinions, however little probability they carried. We were conversing one day, in company, on this dreadful word of the Gospel: *Many are called, but few are chosen*. Some one remarked that the number of the elect was called a little flock, as that of fools, or the reprobate, was called infinite, and such things. He answered that he thought very few Christians (he spoke of those in the true Church, out of which there is no salvation) would be damned; because, he said, having the root of the true faith, sooner or later it usually yields its fruit, which is salvation, and from being dead, becomes living by charity.

And when asked what, then, was the meaning of this word of the Gospel concerning the small number of the elect, he said that in comparison with the rest of the world and with infidel nations, the number of

* We read the following passage in the *Life of Pere De Ravignan*:—"In certain deaths, there are hidden mysteries of mercy and strokes of grace, in which the eye of man beholds only the strokes of justice. By the gleams of the last light, God reveals Himself to souls whose greatest misfortune was to have been ignorant of Him; and the last sigh, understood by Him who searches hearts, may be a groan that asks for pardon."

Christians was very small, but that of this small number there would be very few lost, according to this remarkable sentence: *There is no damnation for those who are in Jesus Christ* (Romans, viii. 1). Which, indeed, is to be understood of justifying grace; but this grace is not separated from a faith living and animated by charity. Moreover, as He who gives the grace to begin, gives also the grace to perfect the undertaking, so it is credible that the vocation to Christianity, which is a work of God, is a perfect work, and conducts to the end of all consummation, which is glory.

I added another reason, and he was pleased with it: that the mercy of God being above all His works, and swimming over His justice, as oil over vinegar, there was every reason for trusting in His own natural disposition to pity and forgive, abundantly shown forth in the copious redemption of the Saviour, and there was no sign for believing that God would have commenced to erect the salvation of the true Christian by faith, which is its foundation, without proceeding with it to the end, which consists in charity.

This doctrine is of great consolation, provided it does not make us negligent in doing good; for, it is not enough to say with the ancients: *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*—the Church, the Church, I am in the bosom of the true Church. Since the Church is holy, and the pillar of truth, it is our duty to live holily, as well as to believe truly; for, to commit crimes in the house of God, is to defile His sanctuary, and to render one's self doubly guilty. And who is unaware that the servant who knew the will of his master, and did not trouble himself to perform it, deserved a double chastisement?

We should fear, said St. Francis de Sales, the judgments of God, but without discouragement, and take courage at the sight of His mercies, but without presumption. Those who have an excessive and inordinate fear of being damned show plainly that they have great need of humility and submission. We must indeed abase, annihilate, lose ourselves, but this ought to be to gain, preserve, save ourselves. That humility which is prejudicial to charity is assuredly a false humility. Such is that which leads to trouble, to discouragement, to despair; for it is contrary to charity, which, while commanding us *to work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, forbids us at the same time, to diffide in the goodness of God, who desires the conversion and salvation of all.

III.—THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

THE opinion of St. Francis de Sales, says the Bishop of Belley, was that from the thought of purgatory, we should draw more consolation than pain. The greater number of those, he said, who fear purgatory so much, do so in consideration of their own interests, and of the love they bear themselves rather than the interests of God, and this happens because those who treat of this place from the pulpit usually speak of its pains, and are silent of the happiness and peace which are found in it.

No doubt the torments are so great that the greatest sufferings of this life cannot be compared with them; but still, the interior satisfaction there is such, that no enjoyment or prosperity on earth can equal it.

1. The souls in purgatory are in a constant state of union with God.

2. They are perfectly submissive to His will, or, to speak better, their will is so transformed into the will of God, that they cannot wish for anything but what God wishes; in such a manner, that if paradise were opened to them, they would rather precipitate themselves into hell than appear before God with the stains which they still perceive on themselves.

3. They are purified voluntarily and lovingly, because such is the divine good-pleasure. The souls in purgatory are there indeed for their sins, sins which they have detested, and sovereignly detested; but as to the abjection and pain that still remain, of being detained there, and deprived for a time of the joy of the blessed in paradise, they endure all that lovingly, and devoutly pronounce this canticle of the divine justice: *Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.*

4. They wish to be there in the manner that pleases God, and for as long a time as He pleases.

5. They are impeccable, and cannot have the least motion of impatience, or be guilty of the smallest imperfection.

6. They love God more than themselves, and more than all things else, with a perfect, pure, and disinterested love.

7. They are consoled by angels.

8. They are assured of their salvation.

9. Their most bitter bitterness is in the most profound peace.

10. If purgatory is a kind of hell as regards pain, it is a kind of paradise as regards the sweetness which charity diffuses through the heart—charity which is stronger than death, and more powerful than hell, and whose lamps are fire and flames.

11. A state more desirable than terrible, since its flames are flames of love.

12. Terrible, nevertheless, since they postpone the end of all consummation, which consists in seeing and loving God, and in this vision and love, to praise and glorify Him for all eternity. With regard to this subject, St. Francis de Sales approved very much of the admirable *Treatise on Purgatory*, written by the blessed Catherine of Genoa.

If these things be so, I shall be asked, why recommend so much the souls in purgatory to our charity?

The reason is, because, notwithstanding their advantages, the state of these souls is still very sad and truly deserving of compassion, and, moreover, the glory which they will render to God in heaven is delayed. These two motives ought to engage us, by our prayers, our fasts, our alms, and all kinds of good works, especially by offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass for them, to procure their speedy deliverance.

When any of St. Francis de Sales' friends or acquaintances died, he never grew weary of speaking fondly of them, or recommending them to the prayers of others.

His usual expression was: *We do not remember sufficiently our dead, our faithful departed*; and the proof of it is, that we do not speak enough of them. We turn away from that discourse as from a sad subject, we leave the dead to bury their dead; their memory perishes from us with the sound of their mourning-bell; we forget that the friendship which ends, even with death, is never true, Holy Scripture assuring us that true love is stronger than death.

He was accustomed to say that in this single work of mercy, the thirteen others are assembled.

Is it not, he said, in some manner, to visit the sick, to obtain by our prayers the relief of the poor suffering souls in purgatory?

Is it not to give drink to those who thirst after the vision of God, and who are enveloped in burning flames, to share with them the dew of our prayers?

Is it not to feed the hungry, to aid in their deliverance by the means which faith suggests?

Is it not truly to ransom prisoners?

Is it not to clothe the naked, to procure for them a garment of light, a raiment of glory?

Is it not an admirable degree of hospitality, to procure their admission into the heavenly Jerusalem, and to make them fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God?

Is it not a greater service to place souls in heaven, than to bury bodies in the earth?

As to spirituals, is it not a work whose merit may be compared to that of counselling the weak, correcting the wayward, instructing the ignorant, forgiving offences, enduring injuries? And what consolation, however great, that can be given to the afflicted of this world, is comparable with that which is brought by our prayers, to those poor souls who have such bitter need of them?

IV.—MOTIVES ON ACCOUNT OF WHICH IMPERFECT CHRISTIANS OUGHT NOT TO FEAR THEIR PASSAGE TO ETERNITY, AND MAY EVEN DESIRE IT.*

As the Christian life is only an imitation and expression of the life which Jesus Christ led for us, so the Christian death ought to be only an imitation and expression of the death which Jesus Christ endured for us. Jesus Christ died to satisfy the justice of God for the sins of all men, and to put an end to the reign of iniquity, to render to His Father the most perfect obedience, by submitting to the sentence of death justly pronounced against all sinners, whose place He held, to render by His death an infinite homage to the majesty of God, and to acknowledge His sovereign dominion over all creatures. Every Christian is obliged to accept death in these same dispositions, and should esteem himself only too happy in the thought that Jesus Christ wished to unite the sacrifice of His divine life, infinitely more precious than the lives of all men and angels, with the sacrifice which each one of us should make to God of our miserable and unworthy life, and that He wished to render our death, by uniting it with His, capable of meriting for us an eternal life. To die without participating in these dispositions of Jesus Christ at death, is not to die as a Christian, it

* We have so often met, in the exercise of our holy ministry, with souls who have an excessive fear of death, that we have thought it a duty to add to the consoling reflections of St. Francis de Sales another chapter, the most solid we know on the subject.

is to die of necessity as a beast, it is to die as the reprobate.

Every Christian is obliged to labour for the acquisition of these dispositions during his whole life, which is only given him to learn how to die well. We should often adore in Jesus Christ that ardent zeal which He had to satisfy the justice of God and to destroy sin, that spirit of obedience and sacrifice in which He lived and died, and which He still retains in the mystery of the Eucharist. We should ask Him to share it with us, especially during the time of the holy sacrifice of the Mass and Communion, when Jesus Christ offers Himself again to His Father in these same dispositions, and comes to us to communicate them to us. The more we participate in these holy dispositions, the less we shall fear a death which ought to be most precious and meritorious before God, and which will be the more so, as we shall more fully enter into the designs of Jesus Christ, who, dying really but once, to render to His Father the supreme honour which was due to Him, desired to offer to Him till the end of ages the death of each of His members, as a continuation of His sacrifice.

One of the chief effects of the Incarnation and Death of Jesus Christ has been to deliver us from the fear of death: He became man, and a mortal man, *that He might destroy by His death him who was the prince of death, that is to say, the devil, and that He might deliver those whom the fear of death held in continual servitude during life.* Is it not in some manner to dishonour the victory of Jesus Christ over death, to tremble before an enemy whom He has vanquished, and to remain still in slavery through fear of dying?

Jesus Christ ardently desired the arrival of the hour that would consummate His sacrifice, by the effusion of His blood: *I have a baptism*, so He calls His passion, *wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!* Should not a Christian, who has the honour of being one of His members, enter into His spirit, and desire the accomplishment of the baptism with which he is to be baptized? For death ought to appear to the true Christian as a baptism, in which he is to be washed from all his sins, and regenerated to a life of immortality, perfectly exempt from every corruption of sin. We should, then, like Jesus, desire with ardour to sacrifice our life as soon as possible:—firstly, to render to the sovereign majesty of God, and all His divine perfections, the greatest glory that any creature can render to Him, and to render the most perfect homage to the death of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour; secondly, to offer to God the most worthy thanksgiving, in gratitude for having sacrificed for us the life of His Son on the cross, as well as for having continued during so many ages to immolate His body and blood on our altars, and in gratitude for having given us His Holy Spirit and the life of grace, which is more precious than all the lives in the world; thirdly, to offer to God the fullest satisfaction that we are able to offer Him for our sins, by offering Him our death in union with that of Jesus Christ; fourthly, to draw down upon ourselves the greatest mercies of God, by an humble acceptance of death, and by the continual sacrifice which we shall make to Him of our life. For, although our life is so vile a thing, so little worthy of being offered to God in sacrifice, defiled as it is with so many sins, yet it is the most considerable present we can make

to Him; and God is so good as to receive this remnant of sin, as a sacrifice of sweet odour.

A countless number of martyrs, of every age, sex, and country, have run to death with joy, and looked upon it as their greatest happiness to be able to sacrifice themselves for God in the midst of the most dreadful torments. The pagan or irregular life which some among them had led previously did not stay their ardour; because they hoped by their death entirely to repair the past. "Why," says St. Jerome, "do we not imitate them in something? Are we not, like them, the disciples of a God crucified for our salvation, and destined to the same kingdom of heaven? It is true that we have not, like them, the happiness of offering to God a bloody death; but, why should we not endeavour to supply its place, by the continual oblation that we can make to Him of the kind of death which He destines for us? For I venture to say," adds this holy father, "that there is as much, and perhaps more, merit in offering to Him our life during the successive moments in which He preserves it to us, than in losing it once by the cruelty of executioners. The sacrifice which we make to God of our life, if sincere, is the greatest act of love that we can make." St. Augustine says: "if the angels could envy any privilege in man, it is his ability to die for the love of God."

We ask of God every day that His kingdom should come. This kingdom of God will be perfectly established in us only by death, which will be for each of us an end to sin, the destruction of concupiscence, and the beginning of the absolute reign of justice and charity. To ask of God, every day, the coming of His kingdom, and, at the same time, to fear death excessively—are these things easily allied? The

desire of the kingdom of God and of eternal life is essential to salvation. "It is not sufficient," says St. Augustine, "to believe by faith in a blessed life, we must love it by charity, and wish that we were already in the celestial abode; and it is impossible to have these dispositions in the heart, without being glad to depart from this life." At the commencement of the divine prayer in which we ask of God the coming of His kingdom, He orders us to say to Him: *Our Father, who art in heaven.* If we sincerely believe that God is our Father, and we His children, how can we fear to go to Our Heavenly Father, in order to reign with Him, to enjoy His possessions, and to repose for ever on His bosom?

The Scripture represents all the faithful as so many persons who expect the last coming of Jesus Christ, who love His coming, and who go forward to meet Him as far as lies in them by their groans and desires. Why are we Christians? Why are we converted to God? *It is,* says St. Paul, *to serve the true and living God, and to expect the heaven of His Son Jesus, whom He has raised up, and who has delivered us from the wrath to come.* To whom will the Lord, as a just judge, render the crown of justice on the great day? The same apostle answers, that it will be to those who love His coming. *Since the earth, and all that it contains, must be consumed by fire, which will precede the coming of the great Judge, what ought you to be,* says St. Peter, *to all the faithful, and what ought to be the sanctity of your life, the piety of your actions, awaiting, and, as it were, hastening by your desires, the coming of the day of the Lord?* Jesus Christ, after having given a description of the frightful signs which will precede His coming, after having told us that men will wither away for fear

in expectation of the evils with which the world of the impious will be threatened, addresses immediately to all His disciples who were present, and to all those who should follow Him during the course of ages, these sweet words of consolation and joy: *As for you, when these things begin to happen, look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. . . . When you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is nigh.* The great maxims which the apostles and Jesus Christ Himself teach us, accord perfectly with an ardent desire of death; but do they accord with an excessive fear of death? Are we not afraid to dishonour those great truths, by the opposition that we show between the dispositions which they require, and those which we entertain? "Jesus Christ," says St. Augustine, "will share His kingdom with all those who shall have sincerely desired that His kingdom should come." "He will render," says the apostle, "the crown of justice to those who love His coming." What, then, should we desire more than His arrival, since it is the sure means of our reigning with Him?

Many persons are tormented at death with the remembrance of their crimes, and, seeing that they have done no penance, they are tempted to despair. "Oh, if I had fasted! Oh, if I had performed great charities for the poor! Alas! I am no longer in a state to perform them. What will become of me? What shall I do?" You can do something greater than all you have mentioned, namely, accept death, and unite it with that of Jesus Christ. There is no mortification comparable to this: it is the deepest humiliation, the greatest impoverishment, the most terrible penance; and I do not at all doubt but that

he who is grieved for having offended God, and who accepts death willingly in satisfaction for his sins, will immediately obtain pardon. What a consolation to be able to perform while dying a greater penance than all the anchorets have been able to perform in deserts, and this at a time when one would seem no longer able to do anything! What a pity to see an innumerable multitude of persons deprive themselves of the fruit of death, which of all the pains of life is the one of most merit! *Ut quid perditio hæc?* Why waste so advantageous an occasion of honouring God, satisfying His justice, discharging one's debts, and purchasing heaven?

I acknowledge that your life is nothing in comparison with that of Our Lord Jesus Christ; but, when offered through love, it is of inestimable value. What does God care about an alms of two farthings? Yet the poor widow, in the Gospel, who gave it, deserved to be praised by the Son of God, and to be preferred to the Scribes and Pharisees, who had given much more considerable alms, because, says He, she has given all that she had, and, notwithstanding her poverty, has given it with a great heart. *Hæc de penuriâ suâ omnia quæ habuit misit totum victum suum.*

We can say the same of him who gives his life to God: he gives all that he has, without reserving anything, and this is what renders death precious. This is what made the early Christians run with so much eagerness to martyrdom: they all wished to give back to Our Lord the life which they had received from Him, and to compensate by their death for that which He had endured for love of them.

We can no longer be martyrs: oh, what an afflic-

tion ! but still we can die for Jesus Christ ! We have a life that we can lose for His love : oh, what a consolation !

The line of distinction which St. Augustine draws between the perfect and the imperfect is that the perfect suffer life with pain and receive death with joy, while the imperfect receive death only with patience, struggling against themselves to submit to the will of God, preferring however to yield to what He requires of them, arming themselves with courage to overcome the desire of life, and to receive death with submission and peace.

Perfection, therefore, consists in desiring to die, that we may no longer be imperfect, that we may wholly cease to offend God, that God may reign perfectly in us, and that this body of sin, which we carry about with us, until death, may, in punishment of its continual revolts against God, be reduced to dust, fully to satisfy His justice and sanctity, and, by this last and most profound humiliation, fully to repair all the injuries which it has committed against the Divine Majesty. We rise towards perfection in proportion as these holy desires of death become more ardent and sincere, and the quickest means of becoming perfect is to desire death with one's whole heart.

The preparations that we might wish to bring with us to our last sacrifice ought not, when the hour of consummating it arrives, to lead us to desire that the sacrifice should be deferred. These preparations are less necessary than submission to the will of God. Our submission can supply the place of these preparations, but nothing can supply the want of our submission : a thing which souls, even the most imperfect, should never forget. It is more

advantageous for us to appear before Jesus Christ, when He announces His coming, than to expose ourselves to the risk of meeting Him too late, by expecting that we shall afterwards be better prepared. The essential preparation is to go before Him with confidence and love; and we must think only of exciting acts of these virtues. It ought to be a great subject of humiliation and confusion to us, not to feel a holy ardour and impatience to go to Him. Happy are we, says St. Chrysostom, if we sigh and groan continually within ourselves, awaiting the accomplishment of our divine adoption, which will be the redemption and deliverance of our bodies and souls—if we desire to depart from this world with as much ardour and impatience as the banished desire an end of their exile, and captives of their imprisonment (Chrys., Hom. xvii. in Gen. et alib.) This impatience, adds the holy doctor, which we testify to God, will serve much to obtain the pardon of our sins, and will be the best of all dispositions for appearing before Him.

We have elsewhere shown that no person, however holy his life may have been, should rely upon his virtues, if God should examine them without mercy. It is to be already condemned, to consent to be judged without a great mercy. Confidence in the divine mercy, and in the merits of Jesus Christ, is the only security for all. Since, then, we must always return to this point, let us, from this moment, abandon ourselves to these dispositions in life and in death. Let us hold, as a certain truth, that the more fully we thus abandon ourselves, the juster shall we be, and the more agreeable our sacrifices to God.

INDEX.

FIRST BOOK.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON GOD, PROVIDENCE, THE SAINTS, ETC.

| CHAP. | PAGE. |
|---|-------|
| I. The inclination God has to do us good, | 27 |
| II. The eternal love of God for us, | 30 |
| III. Confidence in God, founded on the consideration of our misery, | 35 |
| IV. God has given us every thing with His Divine Son, | 37 |
| V. The love of Jesus in His Incarnation, | 42 |
| VI. The love of Jesus in His Passion, | 45 |
| VII. Abundance of our redemption, | 49 |
| VIII. Our Lord practised all the most excellent kinds of love, | 52 |
| IX. God looks upon us lovingly, notwithstanding our weaknesses, | 56 |
| X. How much our sweet Saviour loved every one of us personally, | 58 |
| XI. Love of Jesus for sinners, | 61 |
| XII. How much the mercy of God appears in the conversions of St. Paul and David, | 67 |
| XIII. How great is the mercy of God on the return of the sinner, | 71 |
| XIV. How full of mercy God is, even towards the damned, | 75 |
| XV. The excellence of abandonment to God, | 77 |
| XVI. Conformity to the will of God, | 80 |
| XVII. Practice of conformity to the will of God, | 82 |
| XVIII. God is our Father, | 85 |
| XIX. We should serve God our Father for love, | 89 |
| XX. How jealous God is of our heart, | 90 |
| XXI. An admirable model of perfect abandonment, | 91 |
| XXII. It is good to abandon one's self to Providence, | 94 |
| XXIII. Fear and hope, | 102 |
| XXIV. A will perfectly resigned, | 103 |
| XXV. The love of submission, by which our will is united to the good-pleasure of God; its practice, | 106 |

SECOND BOOK.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON TRIALS OF AN INTERIOR LIFE,
INFIRMITIES OF SOUL AND BODY, ETC.

| CHAP. | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. Maxims for perseverance in piety in the midst of afflictions, | 108 |
| II. Whence our miseries come, | 113 |
| III. Conduct to be observed in interior trials, | 115 |
| IV. Perplexity of the heart which loves without knowing whether it is loved, | 119 |
| V. Means to preserve peace of soul in time of trial, | 122 |
| VI. To attain perfection, we must patiently endure our imperfection, | 125 |
| VII. We must labour for our perfection without uneasiness, | 132 |
| VIII. Indifference about our advancement in virtue, | 136 |
| IX. We should draw profit from our faults, | 140 |
| X. Advantages which we should draw from our defects, | 142 |
| XI. Trials in prayer, | 147 |
| XII. Consolation in temptations, | 153 |
| XIII. Diffidence and confidence, | 157 |
| XIV. Remedy for temptations against purity, | 160 |
| XV. Mode of combating temptations against faith, | 161 |
| XVI. Temptations of blasphemy and infidelity, | 166 |
| XVII. Manner of behaving in the temptations of self-love, | 167 |
| XVIII. The just man falls and rises without perceiving it, | 172 |
| XIX. A good sadness and a bad sadness, | 173 |
| XX. How contrary sadness is to divine love, | 178 |
| XXI. Remedies for a bad sadness, | 180 |
| XXII. Consolations in sufferings, | 190 |
| XXIII. The cross of the good thief, | 196 |
| XXIV. The crosses of Providence are the most agreeable to God, | 197 |
| XXV. The best crosses, | 203 |
| XXVI. The wood of the true cross, | 207 |
| XXVII. Calumnies, | 210 |

THIRD BOOK.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON SICKNESS AND DEATH.

| | |
|---|-----|
| I. The time of sickness, | 216 |
| II. Spiritual advancement in sickness, | 223 |
| III. Prayers suitable to the sick, | 232 |
| IV. The book of the afflicted, | 240 |
| V. The sick who cannot pray, | 245 |
| VI. Advice to convalescents, | 247 |
| VII. Neither to desire nor to refuse comfort in sickness, | 248 |

| CHAP. | PAGE. |
|--|-------|
| VIII. Patience in sickness, | 250. |
| IX. Patience in painful operations, | 252. |
| X. Perseverance in patience, | 254. |
| XI. Excessive fear of death, | 257. |
| XII. Remedies against too great a fear of death, | 259. |
| XIII. God does not abandon us at the hour of death, | 266. |
| XIV. God cannot destroy a soul submissive to His will, | 268. |
| XV. Sentiments at the sight of death, | 269. |
| XVI. How much God loves the saints, notwithstanding their defects and imperfections, | 274. |
| XVII. The sweet and happy death of the predestined, | 277. |
| XVIII. Death of the Saint's young sister, Jeanne de Sales, in the arms of Madame de Chantal, | 282. |
| XIX. Death of the Countess de Sales, mother of the saint, | 287. |
| XX. The rapidity of time, | 299. |
| XXI. We should abandon ourselves to God in life and in death. | 292. |

FOURTH BOOK.

CONSOLING THOUGHTS ON ETERNITY.

| | |
|---|------|
| I. The Christian manner in which we should mourn over those whom we have lost, | 298. |
| II. To a poor mother, on the death of her child in infancy, | 303. |
| III. To a father, on the death of his son, | 306. |
| IV. To a mother, on the death of her son in war, | 307. |
| V. To a lady, on the death of her father, | 311. |
| VI. To a lady, on the death of her husband, | 313. |
| VII. On the death of a brother, | 315. |
| VIII. On the death of a father, | 316. |
| IX. How much the thought of heaven ought to console us, | 317. |
| X. How agreeable it will be to parents and friends to meet again and converse together in heaven, | 323. |
| XI. We should hope to go to heaven, | 329. |
| Adieu of St. Francis de Sales to the pious reader, | 331. |

SUPPLEMENT.

| | |
|---|------|
| I. We should not despair of the salvation of any sinner, | 333. |
| II. Sentiments of St. Francis de Sales on the number of the elect, | 334. |
| III. The souls in purgatory, | 336. |
| IV. Motives on account of which imperfect Christians ought not to fear their passage to eternity, and may even desire it, | 340. |

THE END.