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LETTERS TO PERSONS  
IN  
THE WORLD



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I.—LETTERS TO PERSONS IN THE WORLD.



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*WORKS OF THIS DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH  
TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.*

BY THE

REV. HENRY BENEDICT MACKEY, O.S.B.

UNDER THE DIRECTION AND PATRONAGE OF  
HIS LORDSHIP THE

RIGHT REV. JOHN CUTHBERT HEDLEY, O.S.B.

*Bishop of Newport and Menevia.*

## I.—LETTERS TO PERSONS IN THE WORLD.

WITH PREFACE BY BISHOP HEDLEY.

“The Perfection of Charity is the Perfection of Life.”—Book vi. c. 52.

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, AND ST. LOUIS:

BENZIGER BROTHERS,

PRINTERS TO THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE.



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## P R E F A C E.

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MANY besides myself will have heard with great satisfaction that it is in contemplation to prepare a complete and careful English translation of the works of St. Francis de Sales. The position of St. Francis, as a teacher of the Universal Church, has long been assured. But the recent Pontifical decree, which has enrolled him among those who are formally called Doctors of the Church, has directed the attention of all devout Christians to a more exhaustive examination of all that he has written. Those who use the English tongue may well desire to have an adequate English edition of a Saint who is one of the great devotional teachers of the Church during the time which has elapsed since the Council of Trent.

The two opposite rocks which threaten the soul which aspired to devotion used to be put down as Jansenism on the one hand, and laxity on the other. Jansenism is not perhaps a living danger in these days. The winter of its bitter reign has gradually given way before the warmth of the teachings of St. Alphonsus. No more powerful element can be found in modern spiritual activity than the devotion to the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord which is enforced by this great

Saint. Besides bringing back the children of the Church out of the cold into the warmth and familiarity of their Father's house, it has done much to preserve devotion from degenerating into mere duty, or the worship of principle, or love of one another, or self-respect—developments to which the advance of self-consciousness has given great prominence. It has encouraged the simple by the thought that the highest form of religious worship is easily within their reach, and it has reminded the learned and the educated that child-like devotion to the Incarnation and Passion of our Saviour is for the vast majority the only safe path. St. Francis de Sales, it is needless to say, wrote before Jansenism had infected devotion. Neither did he write and preach against laxity of morals, or licentiousness. He made war against sin, without doubt, as other preachers have done. But his special work was not denunciation of evil or the threatening of the fires of hell. He was like some serene and clear-eyed messenger from heaven who alights upon a confusion and chaos, and whose gentle look and magic voice bring back order and a new harmony. His task was the simplification of Christian devotion. In other words, it was the shortening of the Christian's path to his last end.

Nothing is gained by exaggerating the state into which devotion had fallen at the appearance in the world of St. Francis de Sales. The Church never grows old, and the influence of the Holy Spirit reigns and rules in every age. When Francis was writing



those fugitive letters to Madame de Charmois which he afterwards expanded into the *Introduction à la vie dévote*, the writings of great modern spiritual teachers were already known to the world. The works of Louis of Granada, of St. Theresa, and of St. John of the Cross circulated, at least on this side of the Alps. In the preface to the treatise *De l'Amour de Dieu*, he himself gives a list of a dozen authors who had written devoutly and learnedly on the very subject he was going to treat. The names of more than half of these are almost unknown at the present day; but the mere enumeration proves that spiritual subjects were understood, and well understood, in the early years of the seventeenth century. Not to speak of the "Imitation of Christ," we must not forget that the "Spiritual Combat" was at that very time coming into use in every part of Europe from Spain to Southern Italy. The special evil of the time was not that devotion was not correctly understood by those whose office it was to teach it; it was this—that, in French countries at least, few understood what to say about the ordinary lives of the noble and the gentle. On the one hand, there was a feeling among the best ecclesiastics that Court life was beyond redemption or improvement. On the other hand, the Catholic religion was upheld by the State; its Bishops were great personages, its festivals were honoured, its functions and ceremonies were largely attended, and many of its preachers were followed by a fashionable crowd. The noble gentleman or lady therefore, who wished to "follow the Court," and yet

to be a good Christian, had great difficulty in knowing how to behave. Many confessors would hardly give them absolution; whilst others were too easy and let them do as they pleased. Court life—or in other words, a life of ease, wealth, distinction and refinement—was, and is, a necessity. No doubt such a life is full of danger. But the worst possible result that could ensue would be to drive a whole class into recklessness by telling them they could not possibly be saved. And hardly better could it be to encourage worldly men and women, who merely went to Mass and to fashionable sermons, in the idea that such external practices were real religion. It was to prevent, or put a stop to, these two nearly related evils that St. Francis de Sales wrote and preached. He has been slightly called the Apostle of the “upper classes.” The phrase sounds odious enough; but in his days it was very significant. And when we remember that it was chiefly to make a gentleman a true and humble Christian that he exercised his Apostolate, we need not object to giving him the title. Christianity is a great leveller of class distinctions; and no one has shown men more clearly that they are all brothers in God and in Christ than St. Francis.

There is a letter of his,\* addressed to a young gentleman who was about to enter upon “Court life,” which contains all St. Francis’s mind on this subject. It was written in 1610, that is, about two years after the publication of the *Introduction*, when his thought

\* See Book IV. 2.

was mature and his idea had been well thought out:—

“Sir,” he begins, “you are about to hoist sail and venture on the high seas of this world; you are going to Court. . . . I am not so frightened as some people are. I do not consider such a state of life as absolutely the most dangerous of any, for persons of magnanimity and true manliness.” Then, after giving him various points of advice, he brings in (as he almost inevitably does on such occasions) the example of his model and hero, St. Louis of France: “Imagine that you were a courtier of St. Louis. Well did the holy king like a man to be brave, courageous, generous, good-humoured, courteous, polite, candid, and refined; but he liked him to be a Christian far better. Had you been near him you would have seen him laugh amiably when there was occasion for it, and speak out boldly when it was needful; he would have taken care that all his surroundings were noble and dignified, like a second Solomon, in order that the royal dignity might be kept up; and a moment afterwards he would have been seen serving the poor in the hospital; in a word, he joined civil virtue with Christian virtue, and allied majesty with humility. The truth is, one must understand that no one should be less manly because he is a Christian, or less Christian because he is a man. But to be this he must be a really good Christian—that is to say, very devout, very pious, and, if possible, a spiritual man; for, as St. Paul says, the spiritual man discerneth all things; he knows when, and in

what order, and in what way to practise each different virtue as required." This short extract seems to contain, not an abridgment of St. Francis's spiritual teaching, but the very spirit and essence of it all. Few, perhaps, have well considered what the benefits are which it has conferred upon Christianity in Europe. Christianity is intended to sanctify the world, and not to abolish the world; and the world is not, and can never be, the cloister. For the generality of men of the world the true apostle is he who makes the way of perfection as easy and as smooth as it can be made without sacrificing safety. This is what St. Francis has, by the testimony of the Church herself, done better than any other writer. It is true that both his language, his form, and his method have a history and a pedigree. His language seems to be modelled on Joinville's life of St. Louis. His form is that of the "Spiritual Combat." His method, with its four qualities of familiarity, clearness, unction, and illustration, is to a very great extent the reflex of his own most original and happy genius; but, if it had a predecessor, I should be disposed to look for him among the Italian Humanists of the sixteenth century. Humanism, as far as it affected general literature, mainly consisted in the bringing back into philosophy the flowing and conversational method of Plato and Cicero in the place of the formal argument of Aristotle and the Schoolmen. It was the substitution of talk for proof; easy, polished serious talk, if you please, but still talk. One need merely recall the

familiar names of Erasmus, of Sir Thomas More, of Fisher (who in happier times might himself have been a Francis de Sales), and then recollect that the models of these writers flourished in Italy, from Bessarion to Angelo Poliziani. When St. Francis, at the end of the sixteenth century, studied in Padua, he lived in the very midst of a society which made it its pride and its boast to model its own literary efforts on the wit, the polish, and the gracefulness of the ancient Greeks and Romans. There is no doubt that the style and method of our holy Doctor was affected by these surroundings. But he remained himself, amidst all the seductions of humanistic literature. If any one takes the trouble to compare the draft of pious resolutions which he drew up at Padua with his latest spiritual 'letters, he will see that the youthful and studied elaboration of the former have given way to a style equally polished, but strong in that native force and mother-wit which were the Saint's own. He writes, even in his *Amour de Dieu*, which is the most philosophical of his works, with an ease, a grace, and a polish which leave his favourite Seneca far behind. But the strong, earnest and serious purpose which pervades every line prevents the least suspicion of fine writing; whilst the intense devotion which flames out from his elaborated thought, like the glow of mighty furnaces in the night, gives his words that precious quality of penetration which is peculiar to the words of the Saints.

This English translation of the works of St. Francis

de Sales will form an admirable library of devotion for all who live in the world. I do not forget how much he has written for cloistered souls; the sweet simplicity of his teaching is just as admirably fitted to sanctify the religious as the man of the world. Whilst "devotions" abound and multiply, we are safe in following the guiding hand of the Vicar of Christ, and in taking St. Francis as our master and teacher in whatever relates to real "devotion."

✠ J. C. H.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTICE.

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It is scarcely necessary to say that the "Letters" of St. Francis de Sales were published after his death, and that therefore the following selection from them was not made by the Saint himself. It has been made for the benefit of those who have not leisure to study the whole body of his correspondence, which extends to many volumes. Various editions have appeared under the title "Letters to Persons in the World;"—we have adopted that of Eugène Veillot,\* which is founded on the recent and authentic texts, and is further recommended by his personal piety and well-known literary taste. His principle of division, according to the class of persons addressed, we accept when carried out in his broad spirit. The two books of "Various Letters" might have been somewhat better arranged, and here and there a letter might have profitably been substituted for the one actually chosen. But we have not let the question of such slight possible improvements weigh against the great advantage the reader will enjoy of being able to consult with

\* "Lettres de S. François de Sales à des Gens du Monde." Par M. Eugène Veillot. Paris: Palmé. 1865. Price 5s. (O. Messrs. Burns and Oates.)

facility that original text, every word of which is penetrated with the unction of the Saint's style. The only aim of our translation is to bring readers as close to this as the differences of the two languages will allow, and in this view we have not hesitated to risk occasionally the sacrifice of some minor propriety of English expression.

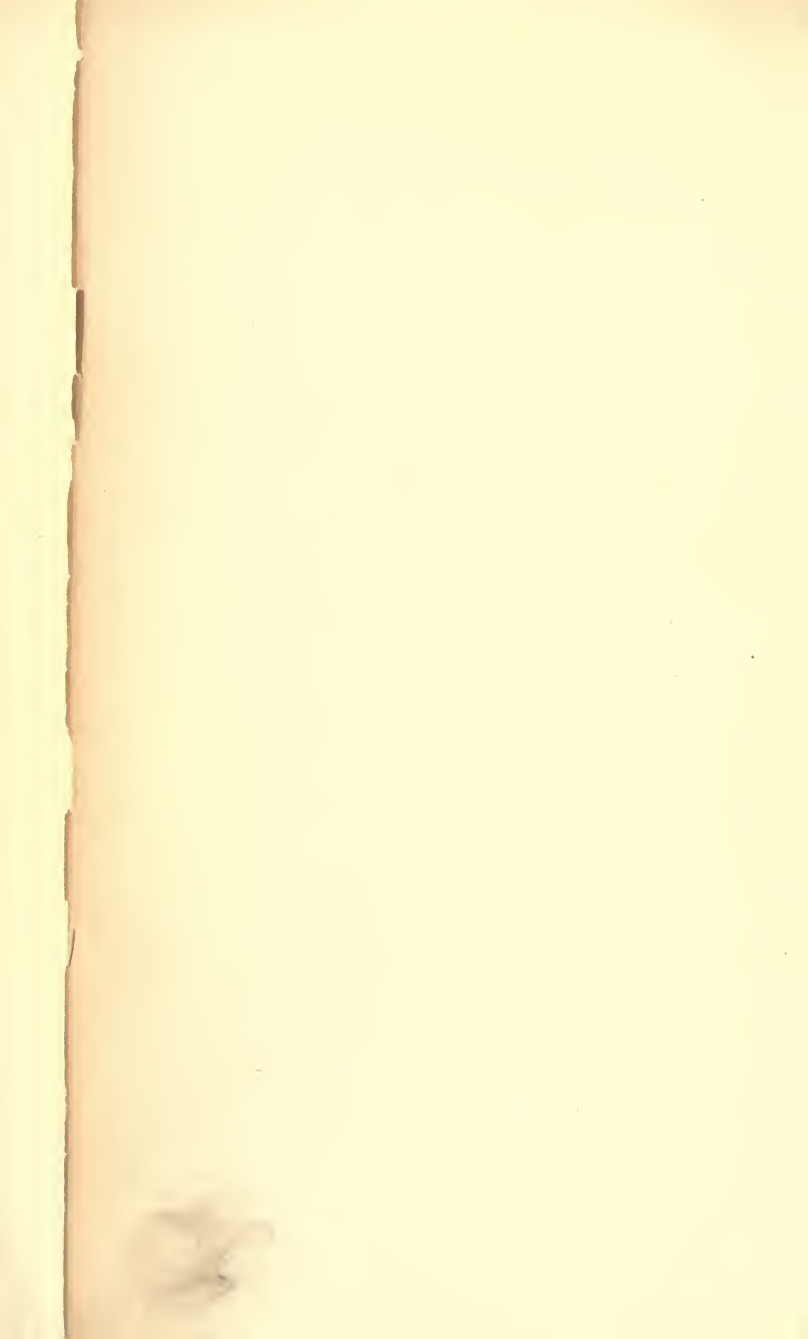
This may be considered the first appearance in our language of the letters of St. Francis. A few of them may be found forming part of an excellent little work called "Practical Piety;" but they are condensed and curtailed. We mention, only to condemn, a book professing to be "A Selection from the Spiritual Letters of St. Francis de Sales," published by Rivingtons. This does not contain true letters of a grand Doctor of the Catholic Church, but what an Anglican lady thinks proper to give after exercising her private theological and literary judgment upon them. They are utterly untrustworthy.\* Our own translation has

\* Here are a few examples, chosen at hazard, of the misrepresentations that abound in this volume. She makes St. Francis utter the absurdity and heresy that, "Even in good actions or in faults one should strive to remain passive" (p. 356). She translates "(Passages of Scripture) necessary for the establishment of the faith;" by "important for the confirmation of the faith" (186). Where he speaks of "that *infâme* Rabelais," she says simply "Rabelais." So she omits the word "infallible" in a most important passage. She always omits the lists of spiritual authors given by St. Francis, and his teaching on many points of the spiritual life (such as the use of the discipline, devotion to the Saints, &c.). She shortens at her own fancy; reducing, for instance, by two-thirds the last letter of Book III., on a rule of life, and liberty of spirit, which is perhaps the grandest of all the Saint's letters.



been executed under the close correction of eminent theologians.

We venture to refer such of our readers as desire information concerning some of the persons addressed in the letters, and the place these writings hold in the teaching of the Saint, to an article on the "Works" of St. Francis in the *Dublin Review* for July, 1882. Fuller information will be found in the "Vie de S. François de Sales," by M. Hamon, *Curé* of S. Sulpice.



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## BOOK I.

### LETTERS TO YOUNG LADIES.

#### LETTER I.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*Advice for acquiring true sweetness.*

I PRAY God to bless your heart, my dear daughter, and I say to you these words according to my promise.

You should, every morning, before all things, pray God to give you the true sweetness of spirit he requires in souls which serve him, and resolve to exercise yourself well in that virtue, particularly towards the two persons to whom you are most bound.

You must undertake the task of conquering yourself in this matter, and remind yourself of it a hundred times a day, recommending to God this good design: for I do not see that you have much to do in order to subject your soul to the love of God, except to make it gentler from day to day, putting your confidence in his goodness. You will be blessed, my dearest daughter, if you do this; for God will dwell

in the midst of your heart, and will reign there in all tranquillity.

But if you happen to commit some little failings, lose not courage : rather, put yourself straight again at once, neither more nor less than if you had not fallen.

This life is short, it is only given us to gain the other ; and you will use it well if you are gentle towards those two persons, with whom God has placed you. Pray for my soul, that God may draw it to himself.

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## LETTER II.

### TO A YOUNG LADY GOING TO LIVE IN SOCIETY.

*We must despise the judgments, contempt and raillery of worldly people.*

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—You will often be amongst the children of this world, who, according to their custom, will laugh at all they see or think they see in you contrary to their miserable inclinations. Do not busy yourself disputing with them, show no sort of sadness under their attacks ; but joyously laugh at their laughter, despise their contempt, smile at their remonstrances, gracefully mock at their mockeries ; and not giving attention to all this, walk always gaily in the service of God ; and in time of prayer, commend these poor souls to the Divine mercy. They are worthy of compassion in having no desire

for honourable company, except to laugh and mock at subjects worthy of respect and reverence.

I see that you abound in the goods of the present life; take care that your heart become not attached thereto. Solomon, the wisest of mortals, commenced his unspeakable misery by the pleasure he took in the grandeurs, ornaments and magnificent equipages he had, though all this was according to his quality. Let us consider that all we have makes us really nothing more than the rest of the world, and that all this is nothing before God and the Angels.

Remember, my dearest daughter, to fulfil well the will of God in the cases in which you may have the most difficulty. It is a little thing to please God in what pleases us: filial fidelity requires that we will to please him in what does not please us, putting before our eyes what the great well-beloved Son said of himself: *I am not come to do my will, but the will of him that sent me.\** For you also are not a Christian to do your own will, but to do the will of him who has adopted you for his daughter and eternal heiress.

For the rest, you are going away, and I—I also am going away, without any hope of seeing you again in this world. Let us pray God earnestly to give us grace so to live according to his pleasure in this pilgrimage, that arriving at our heavenly country, we may be able to rejoice at having seen one another here below, and to have spoken here of the mysteries

\* John vi. 38.

of eternity. In this alone must we rejoice to have loved one another in this life, namely, that all has been for the glory of his Divine Majesty, and our eternal salvation.

Keep that holy gaiety of heart, which nourishes the strength of the soul, and edifies our neighbour. Go thus in peace, my dearest daughter, and God be ever your protector; may he ever hold you in his hand, and conduct you in the way of his holy will. Amen, my dearest daughter. And I promise you that every day I will renew these sacred wishes for your soul, which mine will ever cherish unchangeably. And to God be ever praise, thanksgiving and benedictions. Amen.

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### LETTER III.

#### TO A YOUNG LADY.

*The Saint invites her to despise the world. She is not to show too much wit.*

I ANSWER your last letter, my good daughter. The ardours of love in prayer are good if they leave good effects and occupy you not with yourself, but with God and his holy will. In a word, all interior and exterior movements which strengthen your fidelity towards this Divine will are always good. Love, then, celestial desires, and desire as strongly celestial love. We must desire to love and love to desire what can never be enough desired or loved.

May God give us the grace, my daughter, to absolutely despise the world, which is so hostile to us as to crucify us if we crucify it. But mental abnegations of worldly vanities and goods are made easily enough: real ones are far more hard. And here you are amidst the occasions of practising this virtue up to its extreme point, since to this abnegation is joined reproach, and since it comes on you, without you and through you, or rather in God, with God and for God.

You do not satisfy me about what I said to you the other day, on your first letter, touching those worldly repartees, and that vivacity of heart which urges you. My child, *determine* to mortify yourself in this: often make the cross on your mouth, that it may open only according to God.

Truly a lively wit often causes us much vanity; and we oftener show disdain by the expression of our mind than the expression of our face; we give arch looks by our words, as well as by the looks themselves. It is not good to walk on tiptoe, either in mind or body; for if we stumble the fall is all the worse. So then, my child, take good pains to cut off, little by little, this excrescence of your spiritual tree; keep your heart very low, very quiet there at the foot of the cross. Continue to tell me very frankly and often news of that heart, which mine cherishes with great love, on account of him, who died of love, that we might live by love in his holy death.

*Vive Jésus.*

## LETTER IV.

TO A COUSIN.

*Danger of vain and worldly conversation.*

MY DEAR CHILD,—Indeed, very dear child, my cousin, you must get this poor soul away from risk, for the luxurious way of living in the place where it is, is so perilous that it is a wonder when a person escapes from the midst of it. Alas! my poor child, you have a right to be astonished that a creature should will to offend God, for that goes beyond all astonishment: still it is done, as we unhappily see every day. The unfortunate beauty and grace which these poor worthless girls make themselves believe they have, because those miserable people tell them so, is what ruins them: for they occupy themselves so much with the body that they lose care of the soul. So then, my child, we must do what we can, and remain in peace.

## LETTER V.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*On perfection.*

MADemoiselle,—I received by my brother one of your letters, which makes me praise God for having given some light to your mind: but if it is not yet



altogether detached, you must not be astonished. Spiritual as well as corporal fevers are generally followed by some returns of the feeling of illness, which are useful to the person who is getting better for many reasons ; but particularly because they consume the remains of peccant humours which had caused the malady, so that there may not remain a trace of them ; and because they remind us of the evil past, to make us fear the relapse which we might bring on by too much liberty and license, if the old feelings, like threats, did not keep us on our guard with ourselves, until our health is perfectly restored.

But, my good daughter, as you have half got out of those terrible paths which you have had to travel, I think you should now take a little rest, and consider the vanity of the human spirit, how prone it is to entangle and embarrass itself in itself.

For I am sure you will remark that those interior troubles you have suffered have been caused by a great multitude of considerations and desires produced by a great eagerness to attain some imaginary perfection. I mean that your imagination had formed for you an ideal of absolute perfection, to which your will wished to lift itself ; but frightened by this great difficulty, or rather impossibility, it remained in dangerous travail, unable to bring forth, to the great danger of the child. Then it multiplied useless desires which, like great buzzing drones, devoured the honey of the hive, and the true and good desires remained deprived of all consolation. So now take a little breath, rest a little ;

and by the consideration of dangers escaped, avert those which might come afterwards. Suspect all those desires which, according to the general opinion of good people, cannot come to effect: such as the desires of a certain Christian perfection which can be imagined but not practised, in which many take lessons, but which no one realizes in action.

Know that the virtue of patience is the one which most assures us of perfection; and if we must have patience with others, so we must with ourselves. Those who aspire to the pure love of God have not so much need of patience with others as with themselves. We must suffer our imperfection in order to have perfection; I say suffer, not love or pet: humility feeds on this suffering.

The truth must be told; we are poor creatures; and can only just get on: but God who is infinitely good is content with our little services, and pleased with the preparation of our heart.

I will tell you what is meant by this preparation of heart? According to the Holy Text, God is greater than our heart, and our heart is greater than all the world. Now, when our heart, by itself, in its meditation, prepares the service it will render to God—that is, when it makes its plans for serving God, honouring him, serving our neighbour, mortifying the interior and exterior senses, and similar good resolutions,—at such times it does wonders, it makes preparations and gets ready its actions for an eminent degree of admirable perfection. All this preparation

is indeed nowise proportioned to the greatness of God, who is infinitely greater than our heart; but still this preparation is generally greater than the world, than our strength, than our exterior actions.

A soul which considers the greatness of God, his immense goodness and dignity, cannot satisfy herself in making great and marvellous preparations for him. She prepares him a flesh mortified beyond rebellion, an attention at prayer without distraction, a sweetness in conversation with no bitterness, a humility with no outbreak of vanity.

All this is very good, here are good preparations. And still more would be required to serve God according to our duty: but at the end of this we must find some one to do it: for when it comes to practice we stop short, and perceive that these perfections can neither be so grand in us nor so absolute. We can mortify the flesh, but not so perfectly that there shall be no rebellion: our attention will often be broken by distractions, and so on. And must we, for this, trouble, worry, excite ourselves? Certainly not.

Are we to apply a world of desires to excite ourselves to arrive at this miracle of perfection? No. We may indeed make simple wishes that show our gratitude. I may say: Ah! why am I not as fervent as the Seraphim, in order better to serve and praise my God! but I should not occupy myself with *forming* desires, as if I must in this world attain that exquisite perfection. I must not say: I wish it; I will try to get it; and if I cannot reach it, I will be vexed.

I do not mean to say that we are not to put ourselves in that *direction*; but we are not to desire to get there in one day, that is, in one day of this mortality: for this desire would torment us, and for nothing. To advance well we must apply ourselves to make good way in the road nearest to us, and to do the first day's journey. We must not busy ourselves with wanting to do the last, but remember that we are to do and work out the first.

I will give you this word, and keep it well: sometimes we so much occupy ourselves with being good angels that we neglect being good men and women. Our imperfection must accompany us to our coffin, we cannot move without touching earth. We are not to lie or wallow there, but still we are not to think of flying: for we are but little chicks, and have not our wings yet. We are dying little by little; so we are to make our imperfections die with us day by day: dear imperfections, which make us acknowledge our misery, exercise us in humility, contempt of self, patience, diligence; and in spite of which God regards the preparation of our hearts, which is perfect.

I know not if I am writing to the purpose, but it has come to my heart to say this to you, as I think that a part of your past trouble has come from this—that you have made great preparations, and then, seeing that the results were very small, and strength insufficient to put in practice these desires, these plans, these ideas, you have had certain heartbursts, impatiences, disquietudes and troubles; then have

followed distrusts, languors, depressions, or failings of heart: well, if it is so, be very good for the future.

Let us go by land, since the high sea makes our head turn, and gives us retchings. Let us keep at our Lord's feet, with St. Magdalen, whose feast we are celebrating: let us practise certain little virtues proper for our littleness. Little pedler, little pack. These are the virtues which are more exercised in going down, than in going up, and therefore they are suitable to our legs: patience, bearing with our neighbour, submission, humility, sweetness of temper, affability, toleration of our imperfection, and such little virtues as these. I do not say that we are not to mount by prayer, but step by step.

I recommend to you holy simplicity: look before you, and regard not those dangers which you see afar off. As you say, they seem to you armies, and they are only willow-branches, and while you are looking at them you may make some false step. Let us have a firm and general intention of serving God all our life, and with all our heart: beyond that *let us have no solicitude for the morrow*,\* let us only think of doing well to-day; when to-morrow arrives it will be called in its turn to-day, and then we will think of it. We must here again have a great confidence and acquiescence in the providence of God; we must make provision of manna for each day and no more, and we must not doubt that God will rain more to-

\* Matt. vi. 34.

morrow, and after to-morrow, and all the days of our pilgrimage.

I extremely approve the advice of Father N., that you take a director into whose arms you may be able sweetly to lay your spirit. It will be your happiness to have no other than the sweet Jesus, who, as he wishes us not to despise the service of his ministers when we can have it, so when that is wanting supplies for all :—but only in that extremity, so that if you are reduced to that you will find it out.

What I wrote to you was not to keep you from communicating to me by letters, or speaking with me about your soul, which is tenderly dear and well-beloved to me. It was to extinguish the ardour of the confidence you had in me, who, through my inefficiency and your distance from me, can be to you but very little use, though very affectionate and very devoted in Jesus Christ. Write to me then with confidence, and doubt not at all that I will answer faithfully.

I have put at the bottom of the letter what you want, that it may be for you alone. Pray hard for me, I beg you. It is incredible how pressed down and oppressed I am by this great and difficult charge. This charity you owe me by the laws of our alliance, and I pay you back by the continual memory which I keep of you at the altar in my feeble prayers. Blessed be our Lord. I beg him to be your heart, your soul, your life; and I am your servant, &c.

LETTER VI.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*On friendships founded in charity.*

O GOD! how far more constant and firm are the friendships founded in charity than those whose foundation is in flesh and blood, or in worldly motives.

Do not trouble yourself about your drynesses and barrennesses; rather comfort yourself in your superior soul, and remember what our God has said: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice.\**

What a happiness to serve God in the desert without manna, without water, and without other consolation than that of being under his guidance, and suffering for him! May the most Blessed Virgin be truly born in our hearts to bring her blessings to them. I am in her and in her son entirely yours.

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LETTER VII.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*On the cooling of piety. (Danger of lawsuits.)*

13th June, 1620.

WILL that amiable spirit which I saw in you during some months, while you were in this town, my dearest

\* Matt. v. 3, 6.

daughter, never come back into your heart? Truly, when I see how it has gone out, I am in great perplexity, not about your salvation, for I hope that you will still effect that; but about your perfection, to which God calls you, and has never ceased to call you since your youth.

For, I pray, my dearest daughter, how could I advise you to stay in the world? I know the excellent disposition which is at the bottom of your heart; but it is accompanied with so strong an inclination to the grandeur and dignity of life, and to natural, human prudence and wisdom, and with such great activity, subtlety and delicacy of mind, that I should fear infinitely to see you in the world; there being no condition more dangerous in that state than a good disposition accompanied by such qualities. If we add to this your incomparable aversion to obedience, there is nothing more to say except that on no consideration whatever must you remain in the world.

And yet how could I advise you to enter into religion, while not only do you not desire it, but your heart is entirely opposed to that kind of life?

A sort of life then must be sought neither of the world nor of religion, without the miseries of the world and the constraints of religion. We may just manage, I think, that you should have the *entrée* to some house of the Visitation, to recollect yourself often in the religious life, and still that you should not be bound to it. You may even have a lodging near, for



your retreat, with only the tie of some exercises of devotion useful for a good life. Thus you will have convenience for satisfying your spirit which so strangely dislikes submission and the tie of obedience, which finds it so hard to meet with souls made to its desire, and which is so clear-sighted in finding defects, and so sensitive in feeling them.

Oh! when I call to memory the happy time when I saw you, according to my wish, so entirely stripped of self, so desirous of mortifications, so attached to self-abnegation, I cannot but hope to see it again.

As to your dwelling, I leave you the choice of it: as for mine I think it will be in your country after my return from Rome, which will be about Easter, if I go. But make a good choice of place, where you can be well helped.

As you wish it I will treat with Monsieur N. O God, how ardently and unchangeably I desire that your affairs may be settled without lawsuits. For, you see, the money which your suits will cost, will be enough to live upon, and what certainty is there of the result? How do you know what the judges will say and decide about your cause? And then you pass your best days in this most wretched occupation, and will have few left to be usefully employed in your principal object; and God knows if, after a long quarrel, you will be able to recall your dissipated spirit to unite it to his divine goodness.

My child, those who live on the sea die on the sea; I have scarcely ever seen people embark in lawsuits

who did not die in that entanglement. Now, think whether your soul is made for that; whether your time is rightly devoted to that; get M. Vincent,\* examine well with him all this affair, and cut it short.

Do not wish to be rich, my dearest daughter; or at least if you can only be so by these *miserable ways of lawsuits*, be rather poor, my dearest child, than rich at the cost of your peace.

You should make a general confession since you cannot otherwise soothe your conscience, and since a learned and virtuous ecclesiastic advised it. But I have no time to write more to you, carried off by businesses, and hurried by the departure of this bearer. God be in the midst of your heart. Amen.

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## LETTER VIII.

TO A YOUNG LADY WHO WAS THINKING OF MARRIAGE.

*The married state requires more virtue and constancy  
than any other.*

MADemoiselle, I answer your letter of the second of this month, later than I wished, considering the quality of the advice and counsel you ask me; but the great rains have hindered travellers from starting, at least I have had no safe opportunity till this.

The advice your good cousin so constantly gave you

\* S. Vincent de Paul.

to remain your own mistress, in the care of your father, and able afterwards to consecrate heart and body to our Lord, was founded on a great number of considerations drawn from many circumstances of your condition. For which reason, if your spirit had been in a full and entire indifference, I should doubtless have told you that you should follow that advice as the noblest and most proper that could be offered, for it would have been such beyond all question.

But since your spirit is not at all in indifference, and quite bent to the election of marriage, and since in spite of your recourse to God you feel yourself still attached to it, it is not expedient to do violence to so confirmed a feeling for any reason whatever. All the circumstances which otherwise would be more than enough to make me agree with the dear cousin, have no weight against this strong inclination and propensity; which, indeed, if it were weak and slight, would be of little account, but being powerful and firm, must be the foundation of your resolution.

If then the husband proposed to you is otherwise suitable—a good man, and of sympathetic humour, you may profitably accept him. I say sympathetic, because this bodily defect of yours\* requires sympathy, as it requires you to compensate it by a great sweetness, a sincere love, and a very resigned humility—in short, true virtue and perfection of soul must cover all over the blemish of body.

I am much pressed for time, my dear daughter,

\* *Manquement de taille.*

and cannot say many things to you. I will end, then, by assuring you that I will ever recommend you to our Lord, that he may direct your life to his glory.

The state of marriage is one which requires more virtue and constancy than any other ; it is a perpetual exercise of mortification ; it will perhaps be so to you more than usual. You must then dispose yourself to it with a particular care, that from this thyme-plant, in spite of the bitter nature of its juice, you may be able to draw, and make the honey of a holy life. May the sweet Jesus be ever your sugar and your honey to sweeten your vocation ; ever may he live and reign in our hearts. I am in him, &c.

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## LETTER IX.

TO MADEMOISELLE DE TRAVES.

*The Saint engages her not to marry, and courageously to support family trouble.*

*8th April, 1609.*

MADemoiselle,—Wishing to honour, cherish, and serve you all my life, I have inquired of Madam, your dear cousin, my sister, about the state of your heart, of which she has said what consoles me. How happy will you be, my dear child, if you persevere in despising the promises which the world will want to make you, for in real truth it is only a real deceiver. Let us never look at what it offers, without considering what it hides. It

is true, doubtless, that a good husband is a great help, but there are very few, and good as he may be, he becomes more of a tie than a help. You have a great anxiety for the family which is on your hands, but it would not lessen if you undertook the charge of another, perhaps as large. Stay as you are, and believe me, make a resolution to this effect so strong and so evident that no one may doubt it. The circumstances in which you are now will serve you as a little martyrdom, if you continue to join your labours therein to those of our Saviour, of our Lady and the Saints; who, amid the variety and multiplicity of the importunities which their charge gave them, have inviolably kept the love and the devotion for the holy unity of God, in whom, by whom, and for whom they have conducted their lives to a most happy end.

O that you may, like them, keep and consecrate to God your heart, your body, your love, and all your life! I am, in all sincerity, your &c.

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## LETTER X.

### TO A YOUNG LADY.

*The Saint exhorts her not to go to law and recommends the method of accommodation. (Pernicious effects of lawsuits.)*

I do not tell you the truly more than paternal love my heart has for you, my dearest daughter, for I think

that God himself, who has created it, will tell it you ; and if he does not make it known it is not in my power to do so. But why do I say this to you ? Because, my dearest daughter, I have not written to you as often as you might have wished, and people sometimes judge of the affection more by the sheets of paper than by the fruit of the true interior sentiments, which only appear on rare and signal occasions, and which are more useful.

Well, you ask me for a paper which hitherto I have not been able to find, and which M. has not either. You wish that if it is not in our hands we should send instantly to Rome for a similar one. But, my child, I think there has been a change of bishop at Troyes ; and if so, then we must know his name.

And, without further preface, I am going to say to you, without art or disguise, what my soul wishes to say to you. How long will you aim at other victories over the world or other love for the things you can see there than our Lord had, to which he exhorts you in so many ways ? How acted he, this Saviour of the world ? It is true, my child, he was the lawful sovereign of the world, and did he ever go to law to have so much as *where to lay his head* ? A thousand wrongs were done him ; what suit did he ever make ? Before what tribunal did he ever cite anyone ? None, indeed ; yea, he did not will even to cite the traitors who crucified him before the tribunal of God ! on the contrary, he invoked on them the power of mercy.

And it is this which he has so fully inculcated. *To him who would go to law with thee and take away thy coat, give thy tunic also.\**

I am not at all extravagant (*superstitieux*) and blame not those who go to law, provided they do so in truth, judgment, and justice: but I say, I exclaim, I cry out, and, if need were, would write with my own blood, that those who want to be perfect, and entirely children of Jesus Christ crucified, must practise this doctrine of our Lord. Let the world rage, let the prudence of the flesh tear out its hair with spite if it likes, and let all the wise men of the age invent as many divisions, pretexts, excuses, as they like; but this word ought to be preferred to all prudence: *And if any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat, (en jugement) give him thy cloak also.*

But this, you will tell me, applies to certain cases. True, my dearest daughter; but, thank God, we are in such case, for we aspire to perfection, and wish to follow as near as we can him who said with an affection truly apostolic: *Having food, and wherewith to be clothed, with these we are content.†* And who cried out to the Corinthians: *Indeed, there is already plainly fault and sin in you, for that you go to law with one another.‡* Hearken, my child, to the sentiments and advice of this man, *who no longer lived in himself, but Christ lived in him.§* *Why, says he, do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?||* Notice, my child,

\* Matt. v. 40.

† 1 Tim. vi. 8.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 7.

§ Gal. ii. 20.

|| 1 Cor. vi. 7.

that he speaks, not to a daughter who aspires after a particular manner and after so many inspirations, to the perfect life, but to all the Corinthians. Notice that he wishes them to suffer the wrong, that there is fault in them to go to law with those who cheat and defraud them. But what sin? In that they thus scandalize the heathen children of the world, who said: "See how Christian these Christians are. Their master says: *To him who would take thy coat, give also thy cloak*: see, how for temporal goods they risk the eternal, and the tender brotherly love they should have for one another." On this S. Augustine says: "Note the lesson of our Lord; he says not to him who would take away a ring, give also thy necklace,—both of which are superfluous: but he speaks of the tunic and mantle, which are necessary things."

O, my dearest daughter, behold the wisdom of God, behold his prudence, consisting in the most holy and most adorable simplicity, childlikeness, and, to speak after an apostolic manner, in the most sacred folly of the cross.

But, *thus will say to me human prudence*,—to what will you reduce us? What! are they to tread us under foot, to twist our nose, to play with us as with a bauble? Are they to dress and undress us without our saying a word? Yes, indeed, I wish that; not I, indeed, but Christ wishes it in me; and the Apostle of the cross and of the crucified cries out: *Until now we are hungry, we are thirsty, we are naked, we are buffeted; in fine, we are become the offscouring of the*



world (as an apple peeling, a sweeping up, a chestnut skin, or a nutshell).\* The inhabitants of Babylon understand not this doctrine, but the dwellers on Mount Calvary practise it.

“O,” you will say, my child, “you are very severe, father, all at once.” Indeed it is not all at once, for since I have had grace to know a little the spirit of the cross, this sentiment entered into my mind, and has never left it. And if I have not lived according to it, this has been through weakness of heart and not through thinking it right; the howling of the world has made me do externally the evil I hated internally: and I will dare to say this word, to my confusion, into my daughter’s ear: I never rendered injury or evil except unwillingly (*à contre cœur*). I do not scrutinize my conscience, but so far as I see in the general, I believe I speak the truth; and so much the more inexcusable am I.

I quite agree, my child, *Be prudent as the serpent*,† who despoils himself entirely, not of his dress, but of his very skin, to renew his youth; who hides his head, says S. Gregory (which is, for us, fidelity to the Gospel teaching), and leaves all the rest to the mercy of his enemies to save the integrity of that.

But what am I saying? I write this letter with impetuosity, and I have been obliged to write it at two sittings, and love is not prudent and discreet, it goes violently and in advance of itself.

You have there so many people of honour, of wis-

\* I Cor. iv. 11, 13.

† Mat. x. 16.

dom, of loving temper, of piety: will it not be possible for them to bring Madame de C. and Madame de L. to some understanding which will give you a holy sufficiency? Are they tigers, who cannot be brought to reason? Have you not there M. N., in whose prudence all you have and all you claim would be very safe? Have you not M. N., who will certainly do you this favour of assisting you in this Christian way of peace? And the good Father N., will he not be pleased to serve God in your affair, which regards almost your very salvation, and quite, at least, your advancement in perfection? And then Madame N., should she not be believed, for she is certainly, I do not only say very, very good, but also prudent enough to advise you in this case.

What duplicities, artifices, worldly speeches, and perhaps lies, how many little injustices, and soft and well-covered, and imperceptible calumnies, are used in this confusion of suits and procedures! Will you not say that you wish to marry, scandalizing the whole world by an evident lie, unless you have a constant preceptor who will whisper in your ear the purity of sincerity? Will you not say that you wish to live in the world, and to be supported according to your birth? that you have need of this and that? And what about all this ant's-nest of thoughts and fancies which these transactions will breed in your spirit? Leave, leave to the worldly their world: what need have you of what is required to live in it? Two thousand crowns and still less will abundantly suffice

for a person who loves our Saviour crucified. A hundred and fifty crowns income, or two hundred, are riches for one who believes in the article of evangelical poverty.

But if I were not a cloistered religious, and only associated to some monastery, I should be too poor to have myself called *my lady* by more than one or two servants. How? Have you ever seen that our Lady had so much? What need for it to be known that you are of good family according to the world, if you are of the household of God? Oh! but I should like to found some house of piety, or at least give some assistance to such a house; for, being infirm in body, they would then more willingly keep me. Ah! now it comes out, my dearest daughter. I knew very well your piety was making a plank for self-love, so piteously human is it. In fact, we do not love crosses, unless they are in gold, with pearls and enamel. It is a rich, a most devout, and admirably spiritual abjection to be regarded in a congregation as foundress, or at least great benefactress! Lucifer would have been willing to remain in heaven on that condition. But to live on alms, like our Lord, to take the charity of others in our illnesses, being by birth and in spirit so and so, this certainly is very trying and hard. It is hard to man, but not to the Son of God, who will do it in you.

But is it not a good thing to have of one's own to employ at one's will in the service of God? The expression at *one's will* (*à son gré*) makes our differ-

ence clear. But I say, at *your will*, my father; for I am always your child, God having willed it so. Well, then, my will is that you content yourself with what M. N. and Madame N. think proper, and that you leave the rest, for the love of God and the edification of your neighbour, and the peace of the ladies, your sisters, and that you consecrate it thus to the love of your neighbour and the glory of the Christian spirit. O God! what blessings, graces, spiritual riches for your soul, my dearest daughter. If you do this you will abound and superabound: God will bless your little, and it will satisfy you: no, no, it is not difficult to God to do as much with five barley loaves, as Solomon with all his cooks and purveyors. Remain in peace. I am quite unchangeably your true servant and father.

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## LETTER XI.

### TO A YOUNG LADY.

*The Saint endeavours to turn her away from a suit which she thought of instituting against one who had promised to marry her and broken his word.*

ON the first part of the letter you have written to Madame N. and which you wished to be communicated to me, my dearest daughter, I will say that if M. N. made to you no other assertions than those you give, and if the matter were before us, we should

condemn him to espouse you, under heavy penalties ; for he has no right, on account of considerations which he could and should have made before his promise, to break his word. But I do not know how things go over there, where often the rules which we have in our ecclesiastical affairs are not known.

Meantime, my dearest daughter, my desire to dissuade you from prosecuting this wretched suit did not arise from distrust of your good right, but from the aversion and bad opinion I have of all processes and contentions. Truly the result of a process must be marvellously happy, to make up for the expense, the bitterness, the eager excitements, the dissipation of heart, the atmosphere of reproaches, and the multitude of inconveniences which prosecutions usually bring. Above all I consider worrying and useless, yea, injurious, the suits which arise from injurious words and breaches of promise when there is no real interest at stake ; because suits, instead of putting down insults, publish them, increase and continue them ; and instead of causing the fulfilment of promises drive to the other extreme.

Look, my dear daughter, I consider that in real truth the contempt of contempt is the testimony of generosity which we give by our disdain of the weakness and inconstancy of those who break the faith they have given us : it is the best remedy of all. Most injuries are more happily met by the contempt which is shown for them than by any other means ; the blame lies rather with the injurer than with the

injured. But now, withal, these are my *general* sentiments, which perhaps are not proper in the particular state in which your affairs are; and following good advice, taken on the consideration of the particular circumstances which present themselves, you cannot go wrong.

I will then pray our Lord to give you a good and holy issue to this affair, that you may arrive at the port of a solid and constant tranquillity of heart, which can only be obtained in God, in whose holy love I wish that you may more and more progress. God bless you with his great blessings, that is, my dear child, God make you perfectly his. I am in him your very affectionate, &c.

I salute with all my heart your father, whom I cherish with a quite special love and honour, and madam your dear sister.

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## LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

*Fresh counsels on the same subject.*

How grieved am I, my dearest daughter, not to have received your last letter; but our dear Madame N. having told me the state of your affairs, I tell you from my heart, from a heart which is entirely devoted to yours, that you must not be obstinately set on

going to law ; you will spend your time in this uselessly, and your heart also, which is worse.

Faith given to you has been broken : he who has broken it has all the more sin. Do you wish, on that account, to engage yourself in so ill an occupation as that of a wretched lawsuit ? You will be but poorly revenged, if after having suffered this wrong, you lose your tranquillity, your time, and the peace of your interior.

You could not show greater courage than in despising insults. Happy they who are left free at the cost of the less trying ones ! Exclaim as S. Francis did when his father rejected him, “ Ah ! I will say then with more confidence, Our Father who art in heaven, as I have no longer one on earth.” And you ; ah ! I will say with more confidence : my spouse, my love, who is in heaven.

Preserve your peace, and be content with Divine Providence, which brings you back to the port from which you were departing. As you were intending to act, instead of a prosperous voyage you might have perhaps met with a great shipwreck. Receive this advice from a friend who cherishes you very purely and very sincerely ; and I pray God to load you with blessings. In haste, I salute our dear sister.

## LETTER XIII.

## TO A YOUNG LADY.

*The gift of prayer comes from heaven, and we must prepare ourselves for it with care ; by it we put ourselves in the presence of God. How a young person should behave when her parents oppose her desire of becoming a religious.*

MADemoiselle,—Some time ago I received one of your letters, which I much value, because it testifies to the confidence you have in my love, which indeed is really yours, doubt not. I only regret that I am very little capable of answering what you ask me concerning your troubles in prayer. I know that you are where you cannot lack anything in this kind ; but charity, which loves to communicate itself, makes you ask mine in giving me yours. I will therefore say something to you.

The disquietude you have in prayer, which is joined with a very eager anxiety to find some object which may content your spirit, is enough, of itself, to hinder you from getting what you seek. We pass our hand and our eyes a hundred times over a thing, without noticing it at all, when we seek it with too much excitement.

From this vain and useless eagerness you can only incur lassitude of spirit ; and hence this coldness and numbness of your soul. I know not the remedies you should use, but I feel sure that if you can prevent this eagerness you will gain much ; for it is one



of the greatest traitors which devotion and true virtue can meet with. It pretends to excite us to good, but it is only to make us tepid, and only makes us run in order to make us stumble. This is why we must always beware of it, and specially in prayer.

And to aid yourself in this, remember that the graces and goods of prayer are not waters of earth but of heaven, and that thus all our efforts cannot obtain them. Of course, we must dispose ourselves for them with a great care, but a humble and quiet care. We must keep our hearts open to heaven, and await the holy dew. And never forget to carry to prayer this consideration, that in it we approach God, and put ourselves in his presence for two principal reasons.

1. To give God the honour and homage we owe him; and this can be done without his speaking to us or we to him: for this duty is paid by remembering that he is our God, and we his vile creatures, and by remaining prostrate in spirit before him, awaiting his commands.

How many courtiers go a hundred times into the presence of the king, not to hear him or speak to him, but simply to be seen by him, and to testify by this assiduity that they are his servants? And this end in prostrating ourselves before God, only to testify and protest our will and gratitude is very excellent, holy, and pure, and therefore of the greatest perfection.

2. To speak with him, and hear him speak to us

by his inspirations and interior movements, and generally this is with a very delicious pleasure, because it is a great good for us to speak to so great a Lord ; and when he answers he spreads abroad a thousand precious balms and unguents, which give great sweetness to the soul.

Well, my daughter, as you wish me to speak thus, one of these two goods can never fail you in prayer. If we can speak to our Lord, let us speak, let us praise him, beseech him, listen to him ; if we cannot use our voice, still let us stay in the room and do reverence to him ; he will see us there, he will accept our patience, and will favour our silence ; another time we shall be quite amazed to be taken by the hand and he will converse with us, and will make a hundred turns with us in the walks of his garden of prayer. And if he should never do this, let us be content with our duty of being in his *suite*, and with the great grace and too great honour he does us in suffering our presence.

Thus we shall not be over-eager to speak to him, since it is not less useful for us to be with him ; yea, it is more useful though not so much to our taste. When, then, you come to him, speak to him if you can ; if you cannot, stay there ; be seen, and care for nothing else. Such is my advice, I do not know if it is good, but I am not too much concerned about it, because, as I have said, you are where much better advice cannot fail you.

As to your fear that your father may make you

lose your desire to be a Carmelite, by the long time he fixes, say to God: *Lord, all my desire is before you,\** and let him act; he will turn your father's heart and arrange for his own glory and your good. Meanwhile nourish your good desire, and keep it alive under the ashes of humility and resignation to the will of God.

My prayers which you ask, are not wanting to you; for I could not forget you, especially at Holy Mass; I trust to your charity not to be forgotten in yours.

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LETTER XIV.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*Whom we are to consult about entering religion.*

*Anncy, 3rd July, 1612.*

MADemoiselle,—You think that your desire to enter religion is not according to God's will, because you do not find it agree with that of the persons who have the power to command and the duty to guide you. If this refers to those who have from God the power and duty to guide your soul and to command you in spiritual things, you are certainly right. In obeying them *you* cannot err, although they may err and advise you badly, if they look principally to any thing else than your salvation and spiritual progress. But if you mean those whom God has given you for

\* Ps. xxxvii. 10.

directors in temporal and domestic things, you are wrong when you trust them in things in which they have no authority over you. If we had to hear the advice of our relatives, of flesh and blood, in such circumstances, there would be few who would embrace the perfection of the Christian life. This is the first point.

The second is, that as you have not only desired to leave the world, but would again desire it if allowed by those who have kept you back, it is a clear sign that God wishes your departure, since he continues his inspirations amid so many contradictions. Your heart, touched by the load-stone, always points towards the pole-star, though quickly turned aside by impediments of earth. For, what would your heart say, if unhindered? Would it not say: Let us go from amongst those of the world? This then is still its inspiration; but being hindered it cannot or dares not say thus. Give it its liberty before it speaks, for it could not speak better things, and this secret it says, so quietly to itself: I should like, I should greatly wish to leave the world—this is the true will of God.

In this you are wrong (pardon my straightforward liberty of speech)—in this, I say, you are wrong, to call what hinders the execution of this desire the will of God, and the power of those who hinder you, the power of God.

The third point of my counsel is that you are not at all wrong with God, since the desire of retreat

which he has given is always in your heart, though hindered from its effect. The balance of your mind inclines that way, though a finger is placed on the other side to hinder the proper weighing.

The fourth—that if your first desire has been in any way wrong, you must mend it, and not break it. I am given to understand that you have offered half your property, or the price of that house which is now dedicated to God. Perhaps this was too much, considering that you have a sister with a large family, for which, by the order of charity, you should rather employ your property. So then, you must reduce this excess, and come to this house with a part of your income, as much as is necessary for quiet living, leaving all the rest as you like, and even reserving the above-named part, after your death, for those to whom you may wish to do good. Thus you will guard against extremes and keep to your design, and all will go gaily, gently, and holily.

In fine, take courage, and make a good absolute resolution; though it is not a sin to remain thus in these weaknesses, still, you lose good chances of making progress and of gaining very desirable consolations.

I have informed you exactly of my opinion, thinking you will do me the favour not to think it wrong of me. God give you the holy benedictions I wish you, and the sweet correspondence he desires from your heart, and I am in him, with all sincerity, Mademoiselle, your, &c.

## LETTER XV.

## TO A YOUNG LADY.

*The Saint invites her to follow God's inspiration, and to consecrate herself to him.*

1619.

MADemoiselle,—You made me promise, and I faithfully keep my word. I beg God to give you his holy strength, generously to break all the ties which hinder your heart from following his heavenly attractions. My God! the truth must be told; it is sad to see a dear little bee, caught in the vile web of spiders. But, if a favourable wind break this frail net and cruel threads, why should not this dear little bee loosen itself and get out, and hasten to make its sweet honey?

You see, dearest daughter, my thoughts: make yours known to this Saviour who calls you. I cannot help loving your soul, which I know to be good, and cannot but wish it that most desirable gift—the love of generous perfection. I remember the tears you shed when, saying to you *Adieu* (*A-Dieu*, literally, *to God*), I wished you to *be A-Dieu*. And you, to be more *A-Dieu*, said *Adieu* to all that is not for God (*pour Dieu*). Meanwhile I assure you, my dearest daughter, that I am *greatly* your servant in God.

LETTER XVI.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*The Saint exhorts her to give herself entirely to God.*

*The Eve of our Lady's, 8th September, 1619.*

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—I say to you with all my heart, *Adieu*; may you ever be “to God” in this mortal life, serving him faithfully in the pain of carrying the cross after him here, and in the heavenly life, blessing him eternally with all the heavenly court. It is the great good of our souls to be “to God,” and the greatest good to be *only* “to God.”

He who is only “to God” is never sorrowful, except for having offended God; and his sorrow for that dwells in a deep, but tranquil and peaceful humility and submission. Then he raises himself up in the Divine goodness, by a sweet and perfect confidence, without annoyance or bitterness.

He who is “to God” only, seeks him only; and because God is not less in adversity than prosperity, such a one remains at peace in adversity.

He who is “to God” only, often thinks of him amidst all the occupations of this life.

He who is “to God” only, wishes every one to know whom he serves, and tries to take the means proper for remaining united to him.

Be then all “to God,” my dearest daughter, and be only his, only wishing to please him, and his creatures in him, according to him, and for him. What greater

blessing can I wish you? Thus, then, by this desire, which I will unceasingly make for your soul, my dearest daughter, I say to you “A-Dieu;” and praying you often to recommend me to his mercy, I remain your, &c.

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LETTER XVII.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*The Saint exhorts her to keep her good resolutions. The best afflictions are those which humble us. Means to acquire fervour in prayer.*

MADemoiselle,—I will gladly keep the copy of your vow, and God will keep the fulfilment of it. He was its author, and he will be its keeper. I will often make for this end St. Augustine’s prayer: Alas! Lord, here is a little chicken hidden under the wings of your grace: if it gets out of the shadow of its mother the kite will seize it. Let it then live by the help and protection of the grace which brought it forth. But look, my sister, you must not even think whether this resolution will be lasting; this must be held as so certain and settled that there can no longer be any doubt of it.

You do me a great favour in telling me a word about your inclinations. However slight these may be, they injure our soul, when they are ill regulated. Keep them in check, and do not think them of small



account; for they are of much weight, in the scales of the sanctuary.

The desire to avoid occasions is not to be gratified in this matter; for it makes us give up real earnestness in fighting. This latter is a necessity, while the former is impossible; moreover, where there is no danger of mortal sin, we must not flee, but must conquer all our enemies, and keep on, not losing heart, even if sometimes beaten.

Yes, truly, my dear daughter, expect from me all that you can expect from a true father; for I have, indeed, just such affection for you; you will know it as we advance, God helping.

So then, my good daughter, here you are afflicted, in just the proper way to serve God. Afflictions without abjection often puff the heart up instead of humbling it, but when we suffer evil without honour, or when dishonour itself, contempt and abjection are our evil, what occasions have we of exercising patience, humility, modesty, and sweetness of heart!

The glorious St. Paul rejoiced, and with a holy, and glorious humility, in that he and his companions were esteemed as the sweepings and rakings of the world. You have still, you tell me, a very lively sense of injuries; but, my dear daughter, this "still," what does it refer to? Have you already done much in conquering those enemies? I mean by this to remind you that we must have good courage and a good heart to do better in the future, since we are *only beginning*, though we have a good desire to do well.

In order to become fervent in prayer, desire very much to be so, willingly read the praises of prayer, which are given in many books, in Granada, the beginning of Bellintani, and elsewhere; because the appetite for food makes us very pleased to eat it.

You are very happy, my child, in having devoted yourself to God. Do you remember what St. Francis said when his father stripped him before the Bishop of Assisi? "Now, therefore, I can well say: 'Our father who art in heaven.'" David says: *My father and mother have left me, but the Lord has taken me up.\** Make no apology for writing to me, there is no need, since I am, so willingly, devoted to your soul. May God bless it with his great blessings and make it all his!

Amen.

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### LETTER XVIII.

TO A YOUNG LADY WHO FOUND OBSTACLES TO HER  
DESIRE TO BE A RELIGIOUS.

*We must be always able to say to God: "Thy will be done."*

MADemoiselle,—You should resign yourself entirely into the hands of the good God, who, when you have done your little duty about this inspiration and design which you have, will be pleased with whatever you do, even if it be much less. In a word, you must have

\* Ps. xxvi. 10.

courage to do everything to become a religious, since God gives you such a desire : but if after all your efforts you cannot succeed, you could not please our Lord more than by sacrificing to him your will, and remaining in tranquillity, humility, and devotion, entirely conformed and submissive to his divine will and good pleasure, which you will recognize clearly enough when, having done your best, you cannot fulfil your desires.

For our good God sometimes tries our courage and our love, depriving us of the things which seem to us, and which really are, very good for the soul ; and if he sees us ardent in their pursuit, and yet humble, tranquil, and resigned to the doing without and to the privation of the thing sought, he gives us blessings greater in the privation than in the possession of the thing desired ; for in all, and everywhere, God loves those who with good heart, and simply, on all occasions, and in all events, can say to him,

THY WILL BE DONE.

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## LETTER XIX.

### TO A POSTULANT.

*He praises her for wishing to enter the Order of the Visitation.*

*Anncy, 6th March, 1622.*

I HAVE never seen you, my dearest daughter, so far as I know, except upon the mountain of Calvary, where reside the hearts which the heavenly Spouse favours

with his divine loves. O how happy are you, my dearest daughter, so faithfully and lovingly to have chosen this dwelling-place to adore the crucified Jesus in this life! For thus you are assured of adoring Jesus Christ glorified in the next.

But, look you, the inhabitants of this hill must be despoiled of all worldly habits and affections, as their king was of the garments which he wore when he got there. These, though they had been holy, had been profaned when the executioners stripped them off in the house of Pilate.

Beware, my dear child, of entering into the banquet of the cross, a thousand thousand times more delicious than secular marriage feasts, without the pure white robe, clear of all intention save to please the Lamb. O my dear child, how lovely is heaven's eternity, and how miserable are the moments of earth! Aspire continually to this eternity, and boldly despise this failing scene, and the moments of this mortality.

Let not yourself be misled by fears of past errors, or of future hardships in this crucified life of religion. Say not: how can I forget the world and the things of the world? For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of this oblivion, and will give it to you if, as a daughter of confidence, you throw yourself into his arms entirely and faithfully.

Our mother, your superior, writes to me that you have very good natural inclinations. My child, they are goods, for the management of which you will have to give account; be careful to use them in the service

of him who has given them to you. Plant on this wild stock the grafts of the eternal love which God is ready to give you, if by perfect abnegation of self you dispose yourself to receive them. All the rest I have said to our mother. To you I have no more to say, save that, as God wills it, I am with all my heart, your, &c.



## BOOK II.

### LETTERS TO MARRIED WOMEN.

#### LETTER I.

##### TO A YOUNG MARRIED LADY.

*The Saint congratulates her on her marriage, and gives her advice on the duties of her state.*

12th March 1613.

MAY God be blessed and glorified in this change of state which you have made for his name, my dearest daughter ; and I still say dearest daughter because this change changes nothing in the truly paternal affection which I have given to you. You will find that if you have a perfect resignation of your soul to the providence and will of our Lord, you will advance in this vocation, you will have much consolation, and will become at last very holy. It was what was necessary for your soul, as you have met a gentleman so full of good dispositions.

You are wrong to have a scruple about breaking the fast, as the doctor's advice requires it.

Guide yourself, as regards communion, by the wish

of your confessor ; for you must give him this satisfaction, and you will lose nothing ; for what you may lack as regards receiving the holy Sacrament, you will find in submission and obedience. As a rule of life I will only give you what is in the book ;\* but if God disposes so that I can see you, and if there is any kind of difficulty, I will answer you.

There is no need for you to write me your confession : if you should have some special point on which you want to consult with my heart, which is all yours, you can write.

Be very gentle ; do not live by humours and inclinations, but by reason and devotion. Love your husband tenderly, as having been given to you by the hand of our Lord.

Be very humble towards all ; you must take great care to bring your spirit to peace and tranquillity, and to choke bad inclinations by attention to the practice of the contrary virtues, resolving to be more diligent, attentive, and active in the practice of virtues ; and note these four words that I am going to say to you : your trouble comes from this, that you rather fear vices than love virtues.

If you could but stir the deep part of your soul to love the practice of gentleness and true humility, my dear daughter, you would be admirable ; but it is necessary to often think about it. Make the morning preparation,† and in general make the spiritual life a part of your regular duty ; God will repay you with a

\* *The Introduction.*

† *Introd. ii. 10.*



thousand consolations. But you must not forget to often lift up your heart to God, and your thoughts to eternity. Read a little every day, I beg you, in the name of God; do so for me, who every day recommends you to God, and I beg his infinite goodness to bless you for ever, your, &c.

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LETTER II.

TO A MARRIED LADY.

*Advantages of a holy marriage; how we ought to live in that state.*

*At Lyons, the Eve of our Lady's, 8th September, 1612.*

MADAM,—The hope which I have always had, from a year ago till now, of going into France, has held me back from reminding you by letter of my inviolable affection to your service, as I thought some happy chance would give me the means of paying you this duty in person; but now that I hardly any longer hope for this good, and this trusty bearer gives me so safe an opportunity, I rejoice with you, my dearest daughter—for that word is more cordial.

I rejoice and I praise our Lord for the good and happy marriage you have made, which will serve you as a foundation whereon to build and erect for yourself a sweet and agreeable life in this world, and to pass happily this mortality in the most holy fear of God, in which by his grace you have been nourished

from your cradle. Everybody tells me that your husband is one of the best and most accomplished chevaliers of France, and that your union is not only formed by a holy friendship which will ever tighten it more and more, but also blessed with fertility.

You must then correspond to all the favours of heaven, my dearest child ; for they are without doubt given you that you may profit by them unto the glory of him that gave them to you, and your own salvation. I am sure, my dearest daughter, that you employ your strength for this, knowing that on this depends the happiness of your household and of yourself, in this fleeting life, and the assurance of immortal life after this.

Well, now, in this new state of marriage in which you are, renew often the resolution we have made of living virtuously and holily, in whatever state God might place us.

And if you think good, continue to favour me with your filial love, as on my part, I assure you, my dearest daughter, that having my heart filled with paternal affection, I never celebrate the most Holy Mass without very particularly recommending to God you and your worthy husband, to whom I am, and always will be, as I am to you, Madam, your very humble, &c.

LETTER III.

TO A MARRIED LADY.

*The Vintage.—Sweet, peaceful, and tranquil love.*

MADAM,—I am told that you are well into your vintage. God be praised. My heart must tell you a word which I said the other day to a lady who is also making her vintage, and who indeed is one of your dearest cousins.

In the Canticle of Canticles the Beloved, speaking to her Divine Spouse, says that *his breasts are better than wine, fragrant with precious ointments*.<sup>\*</sup> But what breasts are these of the Spouse? They are his grace and his promise; for he has his bosom, amorous of our salvation, full of graces, which he lets flow from hour to hour, yea from moment to moment, into our spirits, and if we will reflect upon it we shall find that so it is. On the other side, he has the promise of eternal life, with which, as with a holy and pleasant milk, he feeds our hope, as with his grace he feeds our love.

This precious liquor is far more delicious than wine. Now, as we make wine by pressing the grapes, so we spiritually make wine by pressing the grace of God and his promises; and to press the grace of God, we must multiply prayer by quick, but energetic movements of our hearts; and to press his promise we must multiply the works of charity; for it is these to

\* Cant. i. 1, 2.

which God will give the effect of his promises ; *I was sick, and you did visit me,*\* will he say. All things have their season ; we must press the wine in both these vintages ; but we must press without impatience (*presser sans s'empresser*), take pains without disquietude. Considering, again, my dear daughter, that the breasts of the Spouse are his side pierced on the cross—O God, how twisted a branch is this cross, but how well loaded ! There is only one bunch, but worth a thousand. How many grapes have holy souls found therein by the consideration of the many graces and virtues which this Saviour of the world has produced there !

Make a good and abundant vintage, my dear daughter, and may the one serve you as ladder and passage to the other. St. Francis loved lambs and sheep because they represented to him his dear Saviour ; and I wish that we should love this temporal vintage, not only because it is an answer to the prayer we make every day for our daily bread, but also, and much more, because it raises us up to the spiritual vintage.

Keep your heart full of love, but of a love sweet, peaceful, and sedate. Regard your own faults, like those of others, with compassion rather than with indignation, with more humility than severity. Adieu, Madam, live joyously, since you have wholly dedicated yourself to immortal joy, which is God himself, who wants to live and reign for ever in the

\* Mat. xxv. 36.

midst of our hearts. I am, in him, and by him, your, &c.

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LETTER IV.

TO MADAM, WIFE OF PRESIDENT BRULART.

*True devotion and the practice of it.*

9th October, 1604.

MADAM,—It has been an extreme pleasure to me to have had and read your letter: I should like mine to give you a return of pleasure, and particularly to remedy the disquietudes which have arisen in your spirit since our separation. God deign to inspire me.

I have told you once, and I recall it very well, that I had found in your general confession all the marks of a true, good, and solid confession, and that I had never received one that had contented me so entirely. It is the *true* truth, Madam, my dear sister, and be sure that on such occasions I speak very exactly.

If you have omitted to mention something, reflect whether this has been with knowledge and voluntarily: for in that case you must certainly make your confession again, if what you omitted was a mortal sin, or if you thought at the time that it was; but if it was only a venial sin, or if you omitted it through forgetfulness or lack of memory, do not be afraid, my dear sister. You are not bound, I say it at the hazard of my soul,

to make your confession again, but it will do to mention to your ordinary confessor the point you have left out. I answer for it. Again, do not be afraid of not having used as much diligence as was required for your general confession ; for I tell you again very clearly and confidently, that if you have made no voluntary omission you have no need at all to make again a confession which has really been very sufficiently made, so be at peace about that matter. And if you will discuss the matter with the Father Rector, he will tell you the same about it ; for it is the sentiment of the Church our Mother. The rules of the Rosary and the Cord oblige neither under mortal nor under venial sin, directly or indirectly ; and if you do not observe them you no more commit a sin than by omitting to do any other good work. Do not then distress yourself at all about them, but serve God gaily with liberty of spirit.

You ask me what means you must use to gain devotion and peace of soul. My dear sister, you ask me no little thing ; but I will try to tell you something about it, because my duty to you requires it. But take good notice of what I say.

The virtue of devotion is no other thing than a general inclination and readiness of the soul to do what it knows to be agreeable to God. It is that enlargement of heart of which David said : *I have run the way of your Commandments when you have enlarged my heart.\**

\* Ps. cxviii. 32.

Those who are simply good people walk in the way of God ; but the devout run, and when they are very devout they fly. Now, I will tell you some rules which you must keep if you would be truly devout.

Before all it is necessary to keep the general commandments of God and the Church, which are made for every faithful Christian ; without this there can be no devotion in the world. That, every one knows.

Besides the general commandments, it is necessary carefully to observe the particular commandments which each person has in regard to his vocation, and whoever observes not this, if he should raise the dead, does not cease to be in sin and to be damned if he die in it. As, for example, it is commanded to bishops to visit their sheep,—to teach, correct, console ; I may pass the whole week in prayer, I may fast all my life, if I do not do *that*, I am lost . . . .

These are the two sorts of commandments which we must carefully keep as the foundation of all devotion, and yet the virtue of devotion does not consist in observing them, but in observing them with readiness and willingly. Now to gain this readiness we must make several considerations.

The first is that God wills it so ; and it is indeed reasonable that we should do his will, for we are in this world only for that. Alas ! every day we ask him that his will may be done ; and when it comes to the doing, we have such difficulty ! We offer ourselves to God so often, we say to him at every step : Lord, I am yours, here is my heart,—and when he

wants to make use of us, we are so cowardly! How can we say we are his, if we are unwilling to accommodate our will to his?

The second consideration is to think of the nature of the commandments of God, which are mild, gracious, and sweet, not only the general but also the particular ones of our vocation. And what is it then which makes them burdensome to you? Nothing, in truth, save your own will, which desires to reign in you at any cost. And the things which perhaps it would desire if they were not commanded, being commanded, it rejects.

Of a hundred thousand delicious fruits, Eve chose that which had been forbidden to her; and doubtless if it had been allowed, she would not have eaten of it. The fact is, in a word, that we want to serve God, but after our will, and not after his.

Saul was commanded to spoil and ruin all he found in Amalek: he destroyed all, except what was precious; this he reserved, and offered in sacrifice, but God declared that he would have no sacrifice against obedience. God commands me to help souls, and I want to rest in contemplation: the contemplative life is good, but not in prejudice of obedience: we are not to choose at our own will. We must wish what God wishes; and if God wishes me to serve him in one thing, I ought not to wish to serve him in another. God wishes Saul to serve him as king and as captain, and Saul wishes to serve him as priest: there is no doubt that the latter is more excellent than the former:



but yet God does not care about that, he wants to be obeyed.

Just look at this! God had given manna to the Children of Israel, a very delicious meat: and lo! they will none of it, but, in their desires, seek after the garlies and onions of Egypt. It is our wretched nature which always wishes its own will to be done, and not the will of God. Now, in proportion as we have less of our own will, that of God is more easily observed.

We must consider that there is no vocation which has not its irksomenesses, its bitternesses, and disgusts: and what is more, except those who are fully resigned to the will of God, each one would willingly change his condition for that of others: those who are bishops would like not to be; those who are married would like not to be, and those who are not would like to be. Whence this general disquietude of souls, if not from a certain dislike of constraint and a perversity of spirit which makes us think that each one is better off than we?

But all comes to the same: whoever is not fully resigned, let him turn himself here or there, he will never have rest. Those who have fever find no place comfortable; they have not stayed a quarter of an hour in one bed when they want to be in another; it is not the bed which is at fault, but the fever which everywhere torments them. A person who has not the fever of self-will is satisfied with everything, provided that God is served. He cares not in what

quality God employs him, provided that he does the Divine will. It is all one to him.

But this is not all : we must not only will to do the will of God : but in order to be devout, we must do it gaily. If I were not a bishop, knowing what I know, I should not wish to be one ; but being one, not only am I obliged to do what this trying vocation requires, but I must do it joyously, and must take pleasure in it and be contented. It is the saying of St. Paul : *Let each one stay in his vocation before God.\**

We have not to carry the cross of others, but our own ; and that each may carry his own, our Lord wishes him to renounce himself, that is, his own will. I should like this or that, I should be better here or there : those are temptations. Our Lord knows well what he does, let us do what he wills, let us stay where he has placed us.

But, my good daughter, allow me to speak to you according to my heart, for so I love you. You would like to have some little practice to regulate yourself by.

Besides what I have told you to reflect upon,

1<sup>o</sup>. Make a meditation every day, either in the morning before dinner, or an hour or two before supper, and this on the life and death of our Lord ; and for this purpose use Bellintani the Capuchin, or Bruno the Jesuit. Your meditation should last only a good half-hour, and not more : at the end of which add always a consideration of the obedience which our

\* 1 Cor. vii. 24.

Lord showed towards God his father : for you will find that all he has done, he did to fulfil the will of his Father ; and on this *make effort* (*évertuez-vous*) to gain for yourself a great love of the will of God.

2°. Before doing, or preparing to do, things in your vocation which are trials to you, think that the Saints have gaily done things far greater and harder : some have suffered martyrdom, others the dishonour of the world. St. Francis and many religious of our age have kissed and kissed again a thousand times those afflicted with leprosy and ulcers ; others have confined themselves to the deserts ; others to the galleys with soldiers ; and all this to do what pleases God. And what do we that approaches in difficulty to this ?

3°. Think often that all we do has its true value from our conformity with the will of God : so that in eating and drinking, if I do it because it is the will of God for me to do it, I am more agreeable to God than if I suffered death without that intention.

4°. I would wish you often, during the day, to ask God to give you the love of your vocation, and to say like St. Paul when he was converted : *Lord, what will you have me to do ?\** Will you have me serve you in the vilest ministry of your house ? Ah ! I shall consider myself too happy : provided that I serve you, I do not care in what it may be. And coming to the particular thing that troubles you, say : Will you that I do such or such a thing ? Ah ! Lord, though I am not worthy to do it, I will do it most willingly : and thus you

\* Acts, ix. 6.

greatly humble yourself. O my God ! what a treasure you will gain ! greater, without doubt, than you can imagine.

5°. I would wish you to consider how many Saints have been in your vocation and state, and how they have accommodated themselves to it with great sweetness and resignation, both under the New and the Old Testament. Sara, Rebecca, St. Anne, St. Elizabeth, St. Monica, St. Paula, and a hundred thousand others : and let this encourage you, recommending yourself to their prayers.

We must love what God loves ; now, he loves our vocation ; let us also love it, and not occupy ourselves with thinking on that of others. Let us do our duty ; each one's cross is not too much for him : mingle sweetly the office of Martha with that of Magdalen ; do diligently the service of your vocation, and often return to yourself, and put yourself in spirit at the feet of our Lord, and say : my Lord, whether I run or stay I am all yours and you mine : you are my first spouse ; and whatever I do is for love of you, both this and that.

You will see the exercise of prayer which I am sending to Madame du Puy-d'Orbe : copy it, and make use of it ; for so I wish.

I think that making half an hour's prayer every morning you should content yourself with hearing one Mass a day, and reading during the day for half an hour some spiritual book, such as Granada or some other good author.

In the evening make the examination of conscience, and all the day long, ejaculatory prayers. Read much the *Spiritual Combat*; I recommend it to you. On Sundays and feasts, you can, besides Mass, hear Vespers (but not under obligation) and the sermon.

Do not forget to confess every week, and when you have any great trouble of conscience. As for Communion, if it is not agreeable to Monsieur your husband, do not exceed, for the present, the limits of what we fixed at Saint Claude: keep steadfast, and communicate spiritually: God will take, as sufficient for the present, the preparation of your heart.

Remember what I have often said to you: do honour to your devotion; make it very amiable to all those who may know you, especially to your family: act so that every one may speak well of it. My God! how happy you are to have a husband so reasonable and so compliant! You should indeed praise God for it.

When any contradiction comes upon you, thoroughly resign yourself unto our Lord, and console yourself, knowing that his favours are only for the good or for those who put themselves in the way of becoming so.

For the rest, know that my spirit is all yours. God knows if ever I forget you, or your whole family, in my weak prayers: I have you deeply graven in my soul. May God be your heart and your life.

## LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

*Means to arrive at perfection in the state of marriage.*

MADAM,—I cannot give you all at once what I have promised, because I have not sufficient free hours to put together all I have to tell you on the subject you want me to explain. I will tell it you at several times : and besides the convenience to me, you will find the advantage of having time to ruminate my advice properly.

You have a great desire of Christian perfection : it is the most generous desire you can have : feed it and increase it every day. The means of gaining perfection are various according to the variety of vocations : for religious, widows and married persons must all seek after this perfection, but not by the same means. For to you, madam, who are married, the means are to unite yourself closely to God, and your neighbour, and to what belongs to them. The means to unite yourself to God are, chiefly, the use of the Sacraments, and prayer.

As to the use of the Sacraments, you should let no month go without communicating ; and even, after some time, and under the advice of your spiritual fathers, you will be able to communicate more often.

But, as to confession, I advise you to frequent it even more, especially if you fall into some imperfection by which your conscience is troubled, as often happens

at the beginning of the spiritual life : still, if you have not convenience of confession, contrition and repentance will do.

As to prayer, you should apply to it much ; especially to meditation, for which you are, I think, well suited. Make, then, a short hour every day in the morning before going out, or else before the evening meal ; and be very careful not to make it either after dinner or after supper, for that would hurt your health.

And to help yourself to do it well, you must previously know the point on which you are to meditate, that in beginning your prayer you may have your matter ready, and for this purpose you may have the authors who have treated the points of meditation on the life and death of our Lord, as Granada, Bellintani, Capiglia, Bruno. Choose the meditation you wish to make, and read it attentively, so as to remember it at the time of prayer, and not to have anything more to do except to recall the points, following always the method which I gave you on Maunday Thursday.

Besides this, often make ejaculatory prayers to our Lord, at every moment you can, and in all companies ; always seeing God in your heart and your heart in God.

Take pleasure in reading Granada's books on prayer and meditation ; for none teach you better, nor with more stirring power (*mouvement*). I should like you to let no day pass without giving half an hour to the reading of some spiritual book, for this would serve as a sermon.

These are the chief means to unite yourself closely to God. Those to unite yourself properly with your neighbour, are in great number; but I will only mention some of them.

We must regard our neighbour in God, who wills that we should love and cherish him. It is the counsel of St. Paul, who orders servants to serve God in their masters and their masters in God. We must exercise ourselves in this love of our neighbour, expressing it externally: and though it may seem at first against our will, we must not give up on that account: this repugnance of the inferior part will be at last conquered by habit and good inclination, which will be produced by repetition of the acts. We must refer our prayers and meditations to this end: for after having begged the love of God, we must always beg that of our neighbour, and specially of those to whom our will is not drawn.

I advise you to take care sometimes to visit the hospitals, comfort the sick, pity their infirmities, soften your heart about them, and pray for them, at the same time giving them some help.

But in all this take particular care that your husband, your servants, and your parents do not suffer by your too long stayings in church, by your too great retirement, and giving up care of your household. And become not, as often happens, manager of others' affairs, or too contemptuous of conversations in which the rules of devotion are not quite exactly observed. In all this charity must rule and enlighten us, to make



us condescend to the wishes of our neighbour, in what is not against the commandments of God.

You must not only be devout, and love devotion, but you must make it amiable, useful, and agreeable to every one. The sick will love your devotion if they are charitably consoled by it; your family will love it if they find you more careful of their good, more gentle in little accidents that happen, more kind in correcting, and so on: your husband, if he sees that as your devotion increases you are more devoted in his regard, and sweet in your love to him; your parents and friends if they perceive in you more generosity, tolerance, and condescension towards their wills, when not against the will of God. In short, you must, as far as possible, make your devotion attractive.

I have written a little paper on the subject of the perfection of the Christian life. I send you a copy of it, which I want you to communicate to Madame du Puy-d'Orbe; take it in good part, as also this letter, which comes from a soul entirely devoted to your spiritual good, and which wishes nothing more than to see the work of God perfect in your spirit. I beg you to give me some part in your prayers and communions, as I assure you I will give you, all my life, share in mine, and will be without end your, &c.

## LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

*On the rules which we must know how to impose on our devotion.*

MADAM, AND MY SISTER,—I wrote to you six weeks ago to answer all you asked me; and have no doubt you got my letter, which will make me more brief in this.

According to what you propose to me by yours of the 26th September, I approve that our good abbess\* should begin to fully establish those little rules which our Père has drawn up; not indeed so as to stop there, but so as to advance more easily afterwards to greater perfection.

As for our little sister, I leave her to you, and put myself in no trouble about her; only I should not like your Father to fear she might become too devout, as he has always had fear of you; for I am certain she will not sin by excess on that side. My God! the good father we have, and the good husband you have! They are a little jealous for their empire and dominion, which seems to them somewhat violated, when anything is done without their authority and command. What can be done? we must allow them this little bit of human nature. They want to be masters, and is it not right? Truly it is, in what belongs to the service which you owe them; but the good *seigneurs* do not consider that in regard to the

\* Of Puy d'Orbe.

good of the soul one must believe spiritual doctors and directors, and that (saving their right) you must procure your interior good by the means judged fitting by those appointed to conduct souls.

But still, you must condescend greatly to their will, bear with their little fancies, and bend as much as, without spoiling our good designs, you can. These condescensions will please our Lord. I have told you before :—the less we live after our own taste, and the less of choice there is in our actions, the more of solidity and goodness is there in our devotion. We must sometimes leave our Lord in order to please others for the love of him.

No, I cannot refrain, my dear child, from telling you my thought. I know that you will find all good, because I speak with sincerity. Perhaps you have given occasion to this good father and this good husband to mix themselves up with your devotion, and to be restive (*se cabrer*) about it; I cannot tell how. Perhaps you are a little too eager and bustling, and you have wanted to bother and restrict them. If so, that is without doubt the cause which makes them now draw in. We must, if possible, avoid making our devotion troublesome. Now, I will tell you what you must do. When you can communicate without troubling your two superiors, do so, according to the advice of your confessor. When you are afraid that it will trouble them, communicate in spirit; and believe me this spiritual mortification, this privation of God, will extremely please God, and will advance

your heart very much. We must sometimes take a step back to get a better spring.

I have often admired the extreme resignation of St. John Baptist, who remained so long in the desert, quite close to our Lord, without hastening to see him, to hear him and follow him; and I have wondered how, after having seen and baptized him, he could let Jesus go without attaching himself to him in body, as he was so closely united to him in heart? But he knew that he served this same Lord by this privation of his real presence. So I say that God will be served if, for a little, to gain the heart of the two superiors whom he has appointed, you suffer the loss of his real communion; and it will be to me a great consolation, if I know that these counsels which I give you do not disquiet your heart. Believe me, this resignation, this abnegation will be very useful to you. You may, however, take advantage of secret opportunities of communion; for, provided that you can defer and accommodate yourself to the will of these two persons, and do not make them impatient, I give you no other rule for your communions than that which your confessors may give you; for they see the present state of your interior, and can understand what is required for your good.

I answer also about your daughter: let her desire the most holy communion till Easter, since she cannot receive it before that time without offending her good father. God will recompense this delay.

You are, as far as I see, in the true way to resigna-

tion and indifference, since you cannot serve God at your will. I know a lady, one of the greatest souls I have ever met, who has long remained in such subjection to the humours of her husband, that in the very height of her devotions and ardours, she was obliged to wear a low dress, and was all loaded with vanity outside, and except at Easter could never communicate unless secretly and unknown to every one; otherwise she would have excited a thousand storms in her house; and by this road she got very high, as I know, having been her father confessor very often.

Mortify yourself, then, joyously; and in proportion as you are hindered from doing the good you desire, do the good you do not desire. You do not desire these resignations, you would desire others; but do those which you do not desire, for they are worth more.

The Psalms translated or imitated by Desportes are in no way forbidden or hurtful to you; on the contrary, all are profitable: read them boldly, and without hesitation, for there is need of none. I contradict nobody, but I know quite well these Psalms are in no way forbidden you, and that there is no cause of scruple. Possibly some good father does not like his spiritual children to read them, and perhaps he does so on some good ground; but it does not follow that there should not be grounds equally good, and even better, for others to recommend them to theirs. One thing is certain, that you may read them on every proper occasion.

As also, you may enter the cloister of Puy-d'Orbe without scruple; but at the same time there is no cause to give yourself a penance for the scruple you had about it, since the scruple itself is a great enough pain to those who entertain or suffer it, without imposing any more.

Alcantara is very good for prayer.

Keep your heart very wide to receive in it all sorts of crosses and resignations or abnegations, for the love of him who has received so many of them for us. May his name be for ever blessed and his kingdom be confirmed for ever and ever! I am in him, and by him, your, and more than your, brother and servant.

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## LETTER VII.

TO A LADY.

*He points out to her remedies against impatience in the accidental troubles of a household.*

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—Whenever I can manage it you shall have a letter from me: but at present I write to you the more readily, because M. Moyron, my present bearer, is my nearest neighbour in this town, my great friend and ally, by whom, on his return, you will be able to write to me in all confidence, and if the picture of Mother (St.) Teresa is

finished, he will take it, pay for it, and bring it, as I have asked him to do.

But, my daughter, I fancy I did not tell you exactly, in my last letter, what I wanted, concerning your little but frequent impatiences in the accidents of your housekeeping. I tell you, then, that you must pay special attention to this, and that you must keep yourself gentle in them, and that when you get up in the morning, or leave prayer, or return from Mass or Communion, and always when you return to these domestic affairs, you must be attentive to begin quietly. Every now and then you must look at your heart, to see if it is in a state of gentleness: and if it is not, make it so before all things; and if it is you must praise God, and use it in the affairs which present themselves with a special care not to let it get disturbed.

You see, my daughter, those who often eat honey find bitter things more bitter and sour things more sour, and are easily disgusted with coarse meats: your soul, often occupying itself with spiritual exercises which are sweet and agreeable to the spirit, when it returns to corporal matters, exterior and material, finds them very rough and disagreeable; and so it easily gets impatient; and therefore, my dear daughter, you must consider in these exercises the will of God, which is there, and not the mere thing which is done.

Often invoke the unique and lovely dove of the celestial spouse, that he would impetrate for you a true dove's heart; and that you may be a dove, not

only when flying in prayer, but also inside your nest, and with all those who are around you. God be for ever in the midst of your heart, my dear child, and make you one same spirit with him!

I salute through you the good mother and all the Carmelite sisters, imploring the aid of their prayers. If I knew that our dear Sister Jacob were there, I would salute her also, and her little Françon; as I do your Magdalen, who is also mine.

*Vive Jésus.*

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## LETTER VIII.

TO A LADY.

*Advice on the choice of a confessor. Practice for preserving peace and gentleness in domestic affairs.*

MY DEAR SISTER, MY CHILD,—I answer only the two letters which this bearer has given me from you; for the third, sent me by Madame de Chantal, has not yet reached me. It is a great satisfaction to me that you live without scruple, and that the holy Communion is profitable to you; wherefore you must continue it: and on that account, my dear child, since your husband is uncomfortable about your going to N., do not press the matter; for as you have no great things to ask about, all confessors will be equally suitable for you, even the one of your parish—*i.e.*, M. N.—or when you have the opportunity, the confessor of the good



Carmelite mothers. You know how to conduct yourself with all sorts of confessors: wherefore you can act with liberty in this matter. My dear child, continue very gentle and humble with your husband.

You are right not to disturb yourself about bad thoughts, as long as your intentions and will are good; for *these* God regards. Yes, my daughter, do just as I have told you; for though a thousand little deceits of apparent reasons rise up to the contrary, my conclusions are based on fundamental reasons and conformable to the doctrines of the Church: indeed, I tell you that they are so true that the contrary is a great fault. Therefore, serve God well according to them, he will bless you; and never listen to anything on the contrary side, and believe that I must be very certain when I speak so boldly.

I thank the good Mother Prioress, and I bear her with all her sisters in my soul, with great honour and love. But, my daughter, there are very many other things to ask you about this same devotion to the reverend Mother (St.) Teresa; you must get taken for me a life-like portrait of her, down to the cincture only, from that which I am told these good sisters have, and in passing by there, one of our *curés*, who is going thither in a week or so, would bring it to me on his return. I would not act like that with all sorts of daughters, but with you I act according to my heart.

I will recommend to the Holy Spirit the dear widowed sister, that he may inspire her to choose a

husband who will always be a comfort to her : I mean the sacred husband of the soul. Yet if God so dispose as to use her again for the burden of a complete establishment, and wishes to exercise her in subjection, she must praise His Majesty for it, which, without doubt, does all for the good of his own.

Oh ! my daughter, how agreeable to God are the virtues of a married woman, for they must be strong and excellent to last in that vocation ; but also, O my God ! how sweet a thing it is for a widow to have only one heart to please ! After all, this sovereign goodness will be the sun to enlighten the dear good sister, that she may know what path to choose. She is a soul I love tenderly. . . . Wherever she may go I hope she will serve God well ; and I will follow her by the continued prayers which I will make for her. I commend myself to the prayers of our little daughter N. and of N. It is true that N. is my daughter rather more than the others, and I consider that all is mine, my dearest daughter, in him who, to make us his, has made himself all ours. I am in him, my dearest daughter, your, &c.

P.S.—Take particular pains to do all you can to acquire sweetness amongst your people, I mean in your household ; I do not say that you must be soft and remiss, but gentle and sweet. You must think of this, when entering or leaving your house, and when in it, morning, noon—continually. You must make this a chief thing for a time, and the rest, as it were, forget for a little.

LETTER IX.

TO ONE OF HIS NIECES.

*Rules of Life.*

5th March, 1616.

THINK not, I beg you, my dearest niece, my daughter, that it has been from want of mindfulness or affection, if I have so long delayed writing to you : for indeed, the good desire which I have seen in your soul to wish to serve God very faithfully has produced in mine an extreme desire to help you with all my power, apart from the duty which I owe to you besides, and the inclination I have always had for your heart, because of the good esteem I have of it since your tenderest youth.

Well then, my dearest niece, you must cultivate very carefully this well-beloved heart, and spare nothing which can be useful for its happiness : and though this can be done in every season, still this in which you are is the most proper. Ah ! what a rare grace it is, my dear child, to begin to serve this great God while youth renders us susceptible of all sorts of impressions ! And how agreeable the offering when we give the flowers with the first fruits of the tree.

Keep always firmly in the midst of your heart the resolutions which God gave you when you were before him with me ; for if you keep them through all this mortal life they will keep you in the eternal. And in order not only to preserve them but to make them

happily grow, you have need of no other counsels than those I have given to Philothea, in the book of the *Introduction*, which you have: still, to please you, I wish to state in a few words what I chiefly want of you.

1°. Confess every fortnight, when about to receive the divine Sacrament of Communion; and never go to either the one or the other of these heavenly mysteries without a new and very strong resolution to correct more and more your imperfections, and to live with an ever greater purity and perfection of heart. And I do not say that if you find yourself in sufficient devotion to communicate every week you are not to do it, and specially if you find that by this sacred mystery your troublesome inclinations and the imperfections of your life go on diminishing; but I said every fortnight, that you might not put it off longer.

2°. Make your spiritual exercises short and fervent, that your natural disposition may not make prayer a difficulty to you on account of the length of it, and that little by little it may grow tame to these acts of piety. For instance, you should, with inviolable regularity, make every day the morning exercise marked in the *Introduction*; well, to make it short, you may, while dressing, thank God, by ejaculatory prayer, for having preserved you that night, and then make the 2nd and 3rd points, not only while dressing, but in bed or elsewhere, without distinction of place, or actions; then, as soon as ever you can, you must put yourself on your knees, and make the 4th point, commencing

by making that movement of heart which is marked : *O Lord ! behold this poor and miserable heart.* The same for the examen of conscience, which you can make in the evening while going to bed, provided that you make the 3rd and 4th points kneeling, if not prevented by any illness.

So in the church hear Mass with the behaviour of a true daughter of God ; and rather than be wanting in this reverence, leave the church and go away.

3°. Learn to make often ejaculations and movements of your heart towards God.

4°. Be careful to be gentle and affable to every one, but specially at home.

5°. The alms given in your house, give yourself whenever you can : for it is a great increase of virtue to give alms with your own hand when it can well be done.

6°. Visit very willingly the sick of your district, for that is one of the works which our Lord will regard at the day of judgment.

7°. Read every day a page or two of some spiritual book, to keep yourself in relish and devotion ; and on feasts a little more, which will take the place of a sermon.

8°. Continue to honour your father-in-law, because God wishes it, having given him to you as your second father in this world ; and love cordially your husband, giving him, with a gentle and simple goodwill, all the satisfaction you can ; and be good in bearing the imperfections of all, specially those of your home.

I do not see that for the present I have any more to say, except that when we meet you must tell me how you have behaved in this way of devotion ; and if there is anything more to say I will add it. Live, then, all joyous in God and for God, my dearest child, my niece, and believe that I cherish you very perfectly, and am entirely your, &c.

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LETTER X.

TO ONE OF HIS COUSINS.

*On the way we are to act when living with our parents.*

10th November, 1616.

I STILL want leisure to write to you, my dearest child, although I answer your letter tardily.

Well, now, here you are in your establishment, and you cannot alter it ; you must be what you are, mother of a family, since you have a husband and children. And you must be so with good heart, and with love of God, yea for the love of God (as I say clearly enough to Philothea), without troubling or disquieting yourself any more than you can help.

But I see well, dear daughter, that it is a little uncomfortable to have the charge of the housekeeping in a house where your father and mother are ; for I have never seen that fathers, and still less mothers, leave the entire management to the daughters, although sometimes they should do. For my part I counsel

you to do as gently and nicely as you can that which is recommended, never breaking peace with this father and this mother. It is better that things should not go perfectly well in order that those to whom you have so many duties may be content.

And then, unless I deceive myself, your character is not made for fighting. Peace is better than a fortune. What you see can be done with love you must do : what can only be done with discussion must be left alone, when there is question of persons so greatly to be respected. I have no doubt there will be aversions and repugnances in your spirit ; but, my dearest daughter, these are so many occasions to exercise the true virtue of sweetness : for we must do well and holily and lovingly what we owe to every one, though it may be against the grain, and without relish.

Here, my dearest daughter, is what I can tell you for the present, adding only that I conjure you to believe firmly that I cherish you with a perfect and truly paternal *dilection*, since it has pleased God to give you so complete and filial a confidence in me : so then continue, my dearest child, to love me cordially.

Make well holy prayer ; often throw your heart into the hands of God, rest your soul in his love, and put your cares under his protection, whether for the voyage of your dear husband, or for your other affairs. Do what you can, and the rest leave to God, who will do it sooner or later, according to the disposition of his divine providence. To sum up, be ever all

God's, my dearest daughter, and I am in him, all your, &c.

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## LETTER XI.

### TO A LADY.

*Distance of place can put no obstacle to the union of God's children. How to behave in uncharitable company. Gentleness toward all.*

NEVER think, my dearest daughter, that distance of place can ever separate souls which God has united by the ties of his love. The children of the world are all separated one from another because their hearts are in different places; but the children of God, having their heart where their treasure is, and all having only one treasure which is the same God, are, consequently, always joined and united together. We must thus console our spirits in the necessity which keeps us out of this town, and which will soon force me to set out to return to my charge. We shall see one another very often again before our holy crucifix, if we keep the promises we have made to one another; and it is there alone that our interviews are profitable.

Meanwhile, my dearest daughter, I will commence by telling you that you must fortify your spirit by all possible means against these vain apprehensions which generally agitate and torment it; and for purpose regulate, in the first place, your exercises in such a



way, that their length may not weary your soul, nor trouble the souls of those with whom God makes you live.

A half quarter of an hour, and even less, suffices for the morning preparation ; three-quarters of an hour, or an hour for Mass ; and during the day there must be some elevations of the spirit to God, which take no time, but are made in a single moment. Then the examination of conscience in the evening before rest, besides grace at table, which is an ordinary thing, forms a plan of reunion for your heart with God.

In a word, I wish you to be just *Philothea*, and no more than that ; namely, what I describe in the book of the *Introduction*, which is made for you and those in a similar state.

As to conversations, my dearest daughter, be at peace regarding what is said or done in them : for if good, you have something to praise God for, and if bad, something in which to serve God by turning your heart away from it. Do not appear either shocked or displeased since you cannot help it, and have not authority enough to hinder the bad words of those who *will* say them, and who will say worse if you seem to wish to hinder them ; for acting thus you will remain innocent amongst the hissings of the serpents, and like a sweet strawberry you will receive no venom from the contact of venomous tongues.

I cannot understand how you can admit these immoderate sadnesses into your heart ; being a child of God, long ago placed in the bosom of his mercy, and

consecrated to his love, you should comfort yourself, despising all these sad and melancholy suggestions; the enemy makes them to you, simply with the design of tiring and troubling you.

Take great pains to practise well the humble meekness which you owe to your dear husband, and to everybody; for it is that virtue of virtues which our Lord has so much recommended to us: but if you happen to fail in it do not distress yourself: only with all confidence get up again on your feet to walk henceforward in peace and sweetness as before.

I send you a little method for uniting yourself to God, in the morning and all through the day. So much, my dear daughter, I have thought good to tell you for your comfort at present. It remains that I pray you not to make any ceremony with me, who have neither the leisure nor the will to make any with you. Write to me when you like, quite freely; for I shall always gladly receive news of your soul which mine cherishes entirely, as in truth, my dearest daughter, I am your, &c.

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## LETTER XII.

TO A LADY, THE WIFE OF A SENATOR.

*He exhorts her to give herself entirely to God, assuring her that it is the only happiness.*

17th August, 1611.

MADAM,—The remembrance of your virtues is so agreeable to me that it has no need to be nourished

by the favour of your letters; nevertheless, they give you a new claim on me, as I receive by them the honour and satisfaction of seeing not only that you, in return, remember me, but that you remember me with pleasure. You could not remember a person who has a more sincere affection for you.

I wish you, in presence of our Lord, a thousand blessings; and this blessing above all, and for all, that you be perfectly his: be so, Madam, with all your heart, for it is the great, yea, the only happiness you can have. Yet, your husband, the senator, will have no jealousy about it, as you will be none the less his, and will get the benefit of it, as you cannot give your heart to God without his being joined to it.

I am, Madam, and I am with all I have, your, &c.

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### LETTER XIII.

TO A LADY.

*On the way to correct human prudence.*

I ANSWER the question which the good Mother de Sainte-Marie (Chantal) has put to me from you, my dearest daughter. When human prudence mingles with our plans it is hard to keep it quiet, for it is wondrously importunate, and pushes itself violently and boldly into our affairs, in spite of ourselves.

What must we do in this matter in order that our

intention may be purified? Let us see whether our design be lawful, just, and pious; and if it is, let us propose and determine to do it, in order not now to obey human prudence, but to accomplish in it the will of God.

We have, for instance, a daughter whom human prudence recommends to be placed in a convent, on account of the state of our family affairs,—well now, we will say in ourselves, not before men, but before God, “O Lord! I wish to offer you this daughter, because, such as she is she is yours; and though my human prudence induces and inclines me to this, yet, Lord, if I knew that it was not also your good pleasure, in spite of my inferior prudence, I would not do it at all, but would reject on this occasion this prudence which my heart feels, but which it desires not to consent to, and embrace your will, which my heart perceives not in feeling, but consents to in resolution.”

Oh! my dearest child, at every turn the human spirit troubles us with its claims, and thrusts itself importunately amidst our affairs. We are not greater saints than the Apostle St. Paul, who felt two wills in the midst of his soul, the one which willed according to the old man, and worldly prudence, and this made itself most felt, and the other, which willed according to the Spirit of God. This latter was less felt, but still prevailed, and by it he lived. Whence, on the one hand, he cried out, *O, miserable man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?*\* and

\* Rom. vii. 24.

on the other he exclaimed, *I live no more myself, but Jesus Christ lives in me.*\* And at almost every step we must make the resignation which our Lord has taught us: *Not my will, but thine, O eternal Father, be done,*† and then let human prudence clamour as much as it likes; for the work will no longer belong to it, and you may say to it as the Samaritans said to the Samaritan woman, after they had heard our Lord, *It is now no more on account of thy word that we believe, but because we ourselves have seen and know.*‡ It will be no longer by human prudence, though this may have excited the will, that you make this resolution, but because you know it pleases God. Thus, by the infusion of the divine will you will correct the human will.

Remain in peace, my dearest daughter, and serve God well in the pains and troubles of pregnancy and bringing forth, which you must also carry out according to his good pleasure. And I pray his sovereign goodness to heap blessings upon you, begging you to love me always in him and for him, who has rendered me in all truth your, &c.

\* Gal. ii. 20.

† Luke xxii. 42.

‡ John iv. 42.

## LETTER XIV.

TO TWO SISTERS.

*The Saint exhorts them to peace, gentleness, and concord.*

CERTAINLY, my dearest daughters, it requires only one letter for two sisters who have only one heart and one aim. How profitable it is for you, to hold thus one to another. This union of souls is *like the precious ointment which was poured on the great Aaron,\** as the Psalmist King says, which was so mingled of several odorous perfumes, that all made only one scent and one sweetness: but I will not dwell on this subject.

What God has joined in blood and in affection is indivisible, so long as this God reigns in us, and he will reign eternally. Well then, my dearest daughters, live thus, sweet and amiable to all, humble and courageous, pure and sincere in everything. What better wish can I make for you? Be like spiritual bees which only keep honey and wax in their hives. Let your houses be all filled with sweetness, peace, concord, humility, and piety by your intercourse.

And believe, I beg, that the distance of place or of time shall never take away this tender and strong affection which our Lord has given me for your souls, which mine cherishes most perfectly and unchangeably. And as the difference of your conditions may require that sometimes I write to you in different ways, notwithstanding the unity of your design, I will another

\* Ps. cxxxii. 2.

time do so ; but for the present I will content myself with telling and conjuring you to believe without doubting, my dearest daughters, that I am your, &c.

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LETTER XV.

TO M. AND MADAME DE FORAX.

*The Saint congratulates them on the termination of law-suits,  
and exhorts them to a perfect union.*

*Annecy, 11th November, 1621.*

THOUSANDS of blessings to God, for that at last, Monsieur my dearest brother, and Madame in every way my dearest sister, my child, you are free from these troublesome law affairs, in which, as if amongst thorns, God has willed the beginnings of your happy marriage to be passed. Monsieur N. and I. have made a little bonfire for joy, as sharing in all that affects you.

Well, now, although your pregnancy gives you both a little sensible inconvenience (my daughter who feels it and my dearest brother who feels it in her), I seem always to see you both with two hearts so contented and so brave in serving God well, that this very evil which you feel consoles you as a sign that not having entire exemption from all affliction in this world, your perfect happiness is reserved for heaven, towards which, I am sure, you have your chief aims.

O my dearest brother, continue to solace by your dear presence my dearest daughter. O my dearest

sister, continue to keep my dearest brother in your heart; for as God gives you one to another, be always one another's indeed, and be sure, both of you, that I am, my dearest brother, and my dearest daughter, your, &c.

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LETTER XVI.

TO A LADY.

*Duty of a Christian wife. Counsels during pregnancy.*

MADAM,—The letter which you wrote me on the 16th May, received only on 27th June, gives me great cause to bless God for the strength in which he keeps your heart regarding the desire of Christian perfection, which I find very clearly, in the holy simplicity with which you represent your temptations and the struggle you make; and I see well that our Lord helps you, as step by step and day by day you achieve your liberty and enfranchisement from the imperfections and chief weaknesses which have hitherto grieved you. I doubt not that in a very little time you will be entirely victorious, as you are so brave in the battle, and so full of hope and confidence of victory by the grace of our good God.

The comfort you have in this enterprise is without doubt a presage that it will happily succeed. Strengthen, then, yourself, Madam, in this good design, the end of which is eternal glory; leave nothing behind at home



which is necessary to gain it; continue your frequent confessions and communions: let no day pass without reading a little in a spiritual book: and however little it be if you do it with devotion and attention the profit will be great. Make the examination of conscience in the evening: accustom yourself to little prayers and the prayers called ejaculatory; and in the morning, on getting out of bed, always kneel down to salute and pay reverence to your heavenly Father, to our Lady and your good angel; and if this is only for three minutes you must never fail: have some very devout picture, and kiss it often.

I am glad that you have a more joyous spirit than formerly. Without doubt, Madam, your content will increase every day, for the sweetness of our Lord will spread itself more and more in your soul. Never has any one tasted devotion without finding it very sweet. I am sure that this gaiety and consolation of spirit extends its precious perfume over all your occupations, and specially over domestic affairs; which, as they are the most common, and your principal duty, so they should most smell of this perfume. If you love devotion, make all honour and love it; which they will do if they see good and pleasant effects from it in you.

My God! what splendid means of meriting have you in your house! Truly you can make it a true Paradise of piety, having your husband so favourable to your desires. Ah! how happy you will be if you observe well the moderation which I have spoken of

in your exercises, accommodating them as much as you can to your household affairs, and to the will of your husband, since it is not irregular or savage. I have seen hardly any married women who can at less cost be devout than you, Madam, and you are therefore very strictly obliged to make progress.

I should very much like you to make the exercise of holy meditation, for I think you are very fit for it. I said something to you about it during this Lent; I do not know whether you have put your hand to it; but I should like you only to give half an hour to it each day, and not more, at least for some years; I think that this will strongly aid towards victory over your enemies.

I am pressed for time, and yet I cannot finish, so consoled am I in talking to you on this paper. And believe, Madam, I beg, that the desire which I have once conceived to serve and honour you in our Lord grows and increases every day in my soul, sorry though I am to be able to show so little fruits from it; at any rate I failed not to offer and present to you the mercy of God in my weak and languishing prayers, and above all in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. I add also prayers for your whole household which I cherish only in you and you in God.

I have learnt that you are pregnant; I have blessed God for it, who wants to increase the number of *his* by the increase of *yours*. Trees bear fruits for man; but women bear children for God, and that is why fertility is one of his blessings. Make profit of this pregnancy in two ways: offering your offspring a

hundred times a day to God, as St. Augustine says his mother used to do. Then, in the *ennuis* and troubles which will come to you, and which usually accompany pregnancy, bless our Lord for what you suffer in making for him a new servant, who by means of his grace will praise him eternally with you.

In fine, God be in all and everywhere glorified in our trials and in our consolations! I am, &c.

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LETTER XVII.

TO A LADY.

*Counsels during pregnancy.*

29th September, 1620.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—I am not at all surprised that your heart seems a little heavy and torpid, for you are pregnant, and it is an evident truth that our souls generally contract in the inferior part the qualities and conditions of our bodies: and I say in the inferior part, my dearest daughter, because it is this which immediately touches the body, and which is liable to share in the troubles of it. A delicate body being weighed down by the burden of pregnancy, weakened by the labour of carrying a child, troubled with many pains, cannot allow the heart to be so lively, so active, so ready in its operations, but all this in no way injures the acts of that higher part of the soul, which are as agreeable to God as they could be in the midst

of all the gladnesses in the world ; yea, more agreeable in good sooth, as done with more labour and struggle ; but they are not so agreeable to the person who does them, because not being in the sensible part, they are not so much felt, nor so pleasant to us.

My dearest daughter, we must not be unjust and require from ourselves what is not in ourselves. When troubled in body and health, we must not exact from our souls more than acts of submission and acceptance of labour, and holy unions of our will to the good pleasure of God, which are formed in the highest region of the spirit : and as for exterior actions we must manage and do them the best we can, and be satisfied with doing them, though without heart, languidly and heavily. And to raise these languors and heavinesses and topors of heart, and to make them serve towards divine love, you must profess, accept, and love holy abjection ; thus shall you change the lead of your heaviness into gold, and into gold finer than would be the gold of your most lively gladnesses of heart. Have patience then with yourself. Let your superior part bear the disorder of the inferior ; and often offer to the eternal glory of our Creator the little creature in whose formation he has willed to make you his fellow-worker.

My dearest daughter, we have at Annecy a Capuchin painter who, as you may think, only paints for God and his temple : and though while working he has to pay so close an attention that he cannot pray at the same time, and though this occupies, and even fatigues

his spirit, still he does this work with good heart for the glory of our Lord, and the hope that these pictures will excite many faithful to praise God, and to bless his goodness.

Well, my dear daughter, your child will be a living image of the Divine majesty; but whilst your soul, your strength, your natural vigour is occupied with this work, it must grow weary and tired, and you cannot at the same time perform your ordinary exercises so actively and so gaily; but suffer lovingly this lassitude and heaviness, in consideration of the honour which God will receive from your work. It is your image which will be placed in the eternal temple of the heavenly Jerusalem, and will be eternally regarded with pleasure by God, by angels and by men; and the saints will praise God for it, and you also will praise him when you see it there; and so meanwhile take courage, though feeling your heart a little torpid and sluggish, and with the superior part attach yourself to the holy will of our Lord, who has so arranged for it according to his eternal wisdom.

To sum up, I know not what my soul thinks not, and desires not for the perfection of yours, which, as God has willed and wills it so, is truly in the midst of mine. May it please his Divine goodness that both yours and mine may be according to his most holy and good pleasure, and that all your dear family may be filled with his sacred benedictions, and specially your very dear husband, of whom, as of you, I am invariably the most humble, &c.

## LETTER XVIII.

## TO A LADY IN PREGNANCY.

*We must, each in his own state, make profit of the subjects of mortification which are therein.*

WE must, before all things, my dearest daughter, procure this tranquillity, not because it is the mother of contentment, but because it is the daughter of the love of God, and of the resignation of our own will. The opportunities of practising it are daily ; for contradictions are not wanting wherever we are ; and when nobody else makes them, we make them for ourselves. My God ! how holy, my dear daughter, and how agreeable to God should we be, if we knew how to use properly the subjects of mortification which our vocation affords ; for they are without doubt greater than among religious ; the evil is that we do not make them useful as they do.

Be careful to spare yourself in this pregnancy : make no effort to oblige yourself to any kind of exercise, except quite gently : if you get tired kneeling, sit down ; if you cannot command attention to pray half an hour, pray only a quarter or a half quarter.

I beg you to put yourself in the presence of God, and to suffer your pains before him.

Do not keep yourself from complaining : but this should be to him, in a filial spirit, as a little child to its mother ; for, if it is done lovingly, there is no danger in complaining, nor in begging cure, nor in

changing place, nor in getting ourselves relieved. Only do this with love and with resignation into the arms of the good will of God.

Do not trouble yourself about not making acts of virtue properly ; for as I have said they do not cease to be very good, even if made in a languid, heavy, and as it were *forced* manner.

You can only give God what you have, and in this time of affliction you have no other actions. At present, my dear daughter, your beloved is to you a *bundle of myrrh* :\* cease not to press him close to your breast. My beloved to me, and I to him, ever shall he be in my heart. Isaias calls him the man of sorrows. He loves sorrows, and those that have them.

Do not torment yourself to do much, but suffer with love what you have to suffer. God will be gracious to you, Madam, and will give you the grace to arrange about this more retired life of which you speak to me. Whether languishing *or living or dying we are the Lord's*, † and nothing, with the help of his grace, will separate us from this holy love. Never shall our heart live, save in and for him ; he shall be for ever the God of our heart ; I will never cease to beg this of him, nor to be entirely your, &c.

\* Cant. i. 12.

† Rom. xiv. 8.

## LETTER XIX.

TO A LADY.

*Counsels during pregnancy.*

I AM just starting, my dearest daughter, and hence pressed for time. You must please consider these four lines as if they were many. Be sure, I beg you, that your very dear soul will never be more loved than it is by mine.

But what am I told? They tell me that though pregnant you fast, and rob your fruit of the nourishment which its mother requires in order to supply it. Do it no more, I beseech you; and humbling yourself under the advice of your doctors, nourish without scruple your body, in consideration of that which you bear: you will not lack mortifications for the heart, which is the only holocaust God desires from you.

O my God! what grand souls have I found here in the service of God! His goodness be blessed for it. And you are united with them, since you have the same desires. Live entirely in God, my dearest daughter, and persevere in praying for your, &c.

## LETTER XX.

TO THE SAME.

*Counsels on the same subject.*

MY dearest daughter, since your pregnancy troubles you very much with regard to your long and ordinary



mental prayer, make it short and earnest: make up the want by frequent liftings of your soul towards God; often read, a little at a time, some very spiritual book; form good thoughts while you walk; pray little and often; offer your languors and lassitudes to our crucified Lord; and after your delivery, take up your course again quietly, and accustom yourself to follow the order of some suitable book, in order that when the hour of prayer comes you may not be at a loss like one who at dinner-time has nothing ready. And if sometimes you have no book, make your meditation on some fertile mystery, such as death or the passion—the first which comes to your mind.

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## LETTER XXI.

TO A LADY.

*The Saint consoles her on her childlessness.*

BOTH thoughts are good, my dearest daughter: since you have given all to God, you should seek nothing in yourself but him, who is without doubt himself the good exchanged for the poor little all you have given him. O how this will increase your courage, and make you walk confidently and simply! And it is well for you to think always that your trouble comes from your fault, yet without occupying yourself in thinking what the fault is; for this will make you walk in humility. Do you think, my dearest daughter,

that Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, Anne the mother of Samuel, St. Anne, mother of our Lady, and St. Elizabeth were less agreeable to God when they were barren than when they were fruitful. We must walk faithfully in the way of our Lord, and remain in peace as much in the winter of sterility as in the autumn of fruitfulness.

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LETTER XXII.

TO A LADY.

*The Saint gives her advice on the marriage of her daughter, congratulates her on the virtues of her husband, and speaks of balls. Distant pilgrimages not suitable for women.*

*After the 8th April, 1611.*

It has been to me a great satisfaction to learn a little more fully than usual the news about you, my dearest sister, my child. Though I have not had enough leisure to talk with Madame de Chantal, so as to inquire as particularly as I wished about all your affairs (about which I think you have communicated with her, as with a most intimate friend), still she told me that you walk faithfully in the fear of our Lord, which is the staple of my consolation, since my soul desires so much good to your dearest soul. . . . Regarding the marriage of that dear daughter whom I love very much, I cannot well give you advice, not knowing the kind of gentleman who seeks her hand. For what your husband says is true, that he might

perchance change all the bad habits which you notice in him ; that is, supposing him to be of good natural disposition, and only spoilt by youth or bad company. But if he is of an ill-disposed nature, as only too clearly seems the case, certainly it is tempting God to risk a daughter in his hands, with the uncertain and doubtful presumption of his amendment. And this particularly, if the child is young and herself in need of guidance ; in which case, unable to contribute anything towards the amendment of the young man, yea, there being fear rather that one will be cause of ruin to the other, what is there in all this but evident danger ? Now, your husband is very sensible, and assures me that he will consider all carefully, in which you will help him : and as for me, I will pray, according to your desire, that it may please God to direct well that dear child, that she may live and grow old in his fear.

As for taking this young girl to balls often or seldom, as she will go with you, it is of little consequence.\* Your prudence must judge of that by your own eyes, and according to circumstances ; but as you wish to marry her, and she inclines the same

\* It must be noticed here that the Saint is not stating his general doctrine about balls, but saying that a certain lady, a most intimate friend of S. Chantal, might lawfully take her daughter to assemblies of which he knew the exact character. His general doctrine is given in the 33rd Chapter of the 3rd Part of the *Introduction*, which he thus sums up in the Preface to the *Amour* : “ *In that passage I have declared the extreme peril of dances.* ” —(Translator’s Note.)

way, there is no harm in taking her just as often as is enough and not too much. If I mistake not, this child is lively, vigorous, and of a nature somewhat ardent. Well, now that her mind begins to develop, you must put quietly and sweetly into it the beginnings and first seeds of true glory and virtue, not by reproving her with bitter words, but by continually admonishing her with sensible and kind words on all occasions. And these you must get repeated to her by forming for her good friendships with well-disposed and sensible girls.

Madame de N. has told me that as regards your exterior and the propriety of your house, you get on very nicely; and both she and my brother De Thorens have told me something which fills me with joy: namely, that your husband gains ever a higher and nobler reputation for being a good magistrate; firm, equitable, laborious in the duty of his office, and in all things living and behaving as a very good man and good Christian. I promise you, my dear child, that I felt a thrill of joy at this account, for this is a great and splendid blessing. Amongst other things he told me that he always begins his day by assisting at Holy Mass, and that when opportunity offers he shows worthy and becoming zeal for the holy Catholic religion. May God be always at his right hand, that he may never change but from better to better. You are, then, very happy, my dear child, to have both temporal and spiritual blessings on your house.

The journey to Loretto is a great journey for

women : I advise you often to make it in spirit, joining by intention your prayers to that great multitude of pious persons who go thither to honour the mother of God, as to the place where first the incomparable honour of that maternity came to her. But as you have no vow which obliges you to go there in body, I do not advise you to undertake it : though indeed I advise you to be more and more zealous in devotion to this Holy Lady, whose intercession is so powerful and so useful to souls, that for my part I esteem it the greatest help that we can have for our progress in true piety towards God ; and I can say this from knowing several remarkable exemplifications of it. May the name of this Holy Virgin be for ever blessed and praised ! Amen.

As for your alms, my dear daughter, make them always somewhat liberal and in good measure, yet with the discretion which formerly I have told you of or written about : for if what you put into the bosom of the earth is returned to you with usury by its fertility, be sure that what you put into the bosom of God will be infinitely more fruitful, in one way or another ; that is to say, that God will reward you in this world either by giving you more wealth, or more health, or more contentment. Your, &c.

## LETTER XXIII.

TO A LADY.

*Whose husband had intended to fight a duel.*

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—I see by your letter the state of soul of your dear husband, from the duel which he had resolved upon, though he did not fight it. I think there is no excommunication, because it did not come to that *effect* required by the canons.

But, my dearest child, I confess that I am scandalized to see good Catholic souls, and souls which otherwise have an affection for God, so little careful of eternal salvation as to expose themselves to the danger of never seeing the face of God, and seeing for ever, and feeling, the horrors of hell. Truly, I cannot think how any one can have a courage so misdirected, and for trifles and nothings.

The love which I have for my friends, and specially your dear husband, makes my hair stand on end when I know they are in such peril; and what torments me most is the very little appearance they show of the true sorrow which they ought to have for the offence against God, since they take no pains to hinder it in future. What would I not do to have such things done no more!

But I do not say this to disquiet you. We must hope that God will amend us, all together, if we beg him to do so, as we ought. Get your good husband then to confess; for though I do not think he is under

excommunication, yet he is in terrible mortal sin from which he must escape at once; for excommunication is only incurred by acts, but sin by will.

I think I shall soon have the bracelet of the presence of God,\* whom I beg to bless you with all the desirable blessings which you can long for, my dearest daughter. Your, &c.

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LETTER XXIV.

TO A LADY.

*On the folly of persons in the world about duels.*

*Ancey, 15th May, 1612.*

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—Your last letter has given me a thousand consolations, and also to Madame N., to whom I have communicated it, having seen nothing in it which could not be shown to a lady of that kind, and one who cherishes you so holily. But I write to you in haste, as I must get ready a despatch for Burgundy.

My God! dearest daughter, what shall we say of these men who esteem so much the honour of this miserable world, and so little the beatitude of the other? I assure you that I have had strange troubles of heart, in thinking how near to eternal damnation this dear cousin was placed, and that your dear hus-

\* The allusion is, perhaps, to some reminder of the presence of God.

band would have led him thither. Alas! what sort of friendship—to help to carry one another towards hell! We must pray God to make them see his holy light, and to have great compassion on them.

I see them truly with a heart full of pity, when I consider that they know that God merits to be preferred; and yet have not the courage to prefer him, when occasion requires, for fear of the words of the evil-minded.

Still, that your husband may not rot in his sin, and in the excommunication, I send him this note for confession and absolution. I pray God to send him the required contrition. Well, then, rest in peace; throw your heart and your wishes into the arms of the heavenly Providence, and may the Divine blessing be always amongst you. Amen.

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## LETTER XXV.

### TO A LADY.

*The Saint consoles her in the illness of her daughter and blames the excessive love of mothers for their children.*

*Anney, S. Dominic's Day, 4th August, 1621.*

MADAM,—I honour you and your daughter extremely, and am very pleased to contribute all that I have for your mutual content. To her, please God, I will give my counsel apart; but to you I give it now, assuring myself that your good nature will take it in good part.



Madam, it is possible for any love, except the love of God, to be too strong, and when too strong it is dangerous: it excites the passions of the soul, because being a passion, and the mistress of the passions, it agitates and troubles the spirit. For it is a disturbing force, and finding order it disorders all the economy of our affections.

Well, must we not think that the love of mothers for their children may be the same? Yea, and the more readily because it seems lawful, having the passport of natural inclination, and the excuse of the goodness of the fond heart of mothers.

We speak of you pretty often, the good Father N. and I, and with respect and lovingness: yet,—pardon me, please,—but when he tells me excitements and anxieties of your heart in regard of the illness of Madame de N., I cannot help thinking there is some excess. But now, if you find that I speak my mind too freely, and that I am wrong, what means of excusing myself can I find? At the same time I wish to lose nothing of your good will; for I too highly esteem it, and prize infinitely the heart from which it comes, and the spirit which gives it birth.

And, in general, I wish to say in a word that you have such power to move hearts, mine having felt the power of your spirit, and being quite subdued by it, that you have no need of help to move that of Madame de N. to whatever you please. I am sure that after the power of the Spirit of God, to which all must give way, yours will be in all cases the greatest. Live to

God, Madam, and to the most Holy Trinity, in whom  
I am, yours, &c.

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LETTER XXVI.

TO A RELIGIOUS OF THE VISITATION.

*Same Subject.*

13<sup>th</sup> December, 1621.

I PITY this good lady extremely. Her nature is only too good, or rather her natural goodness is not sufficiently overcome by the supernatural in her. Alas! these poor earthly mothers do not sufficiently regard their children as the work of God, and too much as the children of their womb; they do not sufficiently regard them as children of eternal Providence, and too much as children of temporal birth, and as belonging to the service of the temporal order. But if I can, I will write to her now, if I have the least leisure. . . . .

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LETTER XXVII.

TO A LADY.

*Parents ought to bless God when their children consecrate themselves to his service.*

YOUR letter, which M. Crichant has given me, is a great comfort to me, my dearest daughter, making it

easy to see that as I do not forget your heart, so yours does not forget mine.

You have truly cause to bless God for the inspiration which he gives to your daughter, choosing her for the better part in this mortal life. But, my child, we must do all things in their time. It is truly not I that have fixed the age at which women may become religious, but the Holy Council of Trent.

Believe me, my dearest daughter, if there is nothing extraordinarily urgent, keep quietly in obedience to the ordinary laws of the Church. *Obedience is better than sacrifices.\** It is a sort of obedience very agreeable to God to want no dispensation without great need. Our Lady asked no leave to bring forth before the time, nor to speak with our Lord before the age at which children are accustomed to speak.

Go on quietly, then, and all will turn to blessing, even for your own self: after the child God will open the door to the mother: and it is not forbidden to seethe, in the sacrifice, the mother sheep in the milk of her little one. On every occasion I will serve you very affectionately. You have no need of my help on these occasions, because God has left you the reverend Father Suffren and because these Sisters of the Visitation are so much obliged to your loving kindness. And as you have carpeted their oratory on the day of their entry into the new house, they should do much to carpet their monastery with your good affections, and with those of your dear daughter.

\* 1 Kings, xv. 22.

Recommend me to the mercy of God, and the goodness of his mother. Your most humble, &c.

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## LETTER XXVIII.

TO A LADY.

*The Saint congratulates her on her daughter's entering the Carmelites.*

I HAVE heard from the mouth of dear M. Crichant the history of the entry and reception of your dear little daughter into the holy order of Carmelites, and how she passed from your maternal bosom, my dearest daughter, into that of the good Mother Magdalen of S. Joseph. I trust that this action will be blessed by the sweetness of him who loves speed in good designs and good executions, and who found fault with the prudence of that youth who wanted to go and bury his father before coming entirely to follow Jesus.

There is something a little extraordinary in the case of this child, and perhaps also in her reception, but it is no wonder that a needle free from grease, not distant, not rubbed with oil, not hindered by the diamond, should join itself so quickly and powerfully to its magnet. So then, blessed be God, my dearest daughter, behold your holocaust almost consumed before it is properly placed upon the altar. The Divine Majesty bless you more and more with his holy love, and also the heart of your dear husband, who so sweetly conspires with you in *aspiring* entirely

after God, and *respiring* only in him. I am invariably, your, &c.

My heart is entirely dedicated to that of Mademoiselle de Verton, your dear sister, in which I have seen that God reigns: may it please his Divine Majesty, to reign there for ever.

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LETTER XXIX.

TO A LADY.

*Consolations on the illness of her husband.*

17th February, 1620.

WITH you, my dearest daughter, there is no need of ceremony: for God having made my heart so strongly locked to yours, there is nothing between us, I think. This is to explain why I write to you only these two words, keeping my leisure to write to others whom I must answer.

But what are these two words? Humility and Patience. Yes, my very dear child, and ever, indeed, dearer child, you are surrounded with crosses so long as your dear husband is poorly: now sacred love will tell you that, in imitation of the great lover, you must be on the cross with humility, as unworthy to suffer anything for him who has suffered so much for us, and with patience, not wishing to come down from the cross till after death, if it so please the Eternal Father.

O, my dearest daughter, commend me to this Divine lover, crucified and crucifying, that he may crucify my love and all my passions, in order that I may no longer love any but him, who for the love of our love has willed to be painfully but lovefully crucified.

My brother De Boisy, your host, is going to be made bishop, to succeed me, Madame and His Most Serene Highness having so wished it, without my either directly or indirectly having had anything to do with it. This makes me hope for a little repose, to write something or other about the Divine Lover, and his love, and to prepare myself for eternity.

My dearest daughter, I am beyond comparison the very humble servant of yourself, and of your husband, and of M. C., but above all, of your dear soul, which may God bless. Amen.

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LETTER XXX.

TO A LADY.

*Same subject as the preceding.*

23rd October, 1620.

TRULY, my dearest daughter, I could willingly love the maladies of your dear husband, if charity allowed, because I think them useful to you for the mortification of your affection and feelings. Well, then, leave it to be seen by the heavenly and eternal Providence of our Lord, whether they are for the good of your

soul or of his, both being exercised as they are by means of holy patience. O, my child, how often the world calls good what is evil, and still oftener evil what is good. However, since that sovereign goodness which wills our troubles wills also that we ask of him deliverance from them, I beg it with all my heart to give back good and lasting health (*santé*) to this dear husband, and a very excellent and very lasting holiness (*sainteté*) to my dearest daughter, that she may walk steadily and fervently in the way of true and living devotion.

<sup>ms</sup> I am writing to the Visitation Mother (De Chantal). There seems to be illness everywhere, but illness which is a great good, as I hope. Let the good pleasure of the Divine Majesty ever be our pleasure and comfort in the adversities which come upon us. Amen.

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LETTER XXXI.

TO A LADY.

*Same subject.*

So then, my dearest daughter, you are ever at the foot of the cross amidst tribulations, in the sickness of your dear husband. O, how precious are these pains which seem so hard! All the palaces of the heavenly Jerusalem, so brilliant, so lovely, so delightful, are made of these materials, at least in man's quarter; for in that of the angels the buildings are of

another kind. Yet they are not so excellent; and if envy could reign in the kingdom of eternal love, the angels would envy men two excellencies which consist in two sufferings: one is that which our Lord has borne on the cross for us, and not for them, at least not so entirely, the other is that which men endure for our Lord;—the sufferings of God for man, of man for God.

My dear daughter, if you do not make long prayers amidst your infirmities and those of your husband, make your sickness itself a prayer, offering it to him who has so loved our infirmities that, on the day of his nuptials and sacred joy, he crowned himself and glorified himself with them. Do thus.

Do not bind yourself to the same confessor, when to gain time it may be required to go to the first comer.

I am grieved that Madame de N. is so troubled; but as she loves God, all will work together to her unto good. We must leave to our sweet Lord the very loving disposition by which he often does us more good by troubles and afflictions than by happiness and consolation.

My dearest daughter, say not so much harm of your heart, for I love it so much that I do not like it to be so spoken of; it is not unfaithful, my dearest child, but it is a little weak sometimes, and a little drowsy. But, for the rest, it wishes to be all to God, I know well, and aspires to the perfection of heavenly love. God bless it then for ever, this heart of my



dearest daughter, and give it the grace to be more and more humble. God be blessed!

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LETTER XXXII.

TO A RELIGIOUS WHO HAD BEEN MARRIED.

*The Saint prepares her to accept with submission the death of her child.*

WE must await, my very dear mother, the result of this sickness as quietly as we can, with a perfect resolution to conform self to the Divine will in this loss, if absence for a little time should be called loss, which, God helping, will be made up by an eternal presence.

Ah! how happy is the heart which loves and cherishes the Divine will in all events! Oh! if once we have our hearts closely united to that holy and happy eternity! Go (we shall say to all our friends), go dear friends, go into that eternal existence, at the time fixed by the king of eternity; we shall go thither after you. And as this time is only given us for that purpose, and as the world is only peopled to people heaven, when we go there we do all that we have to do.

This is why, my mother, our old Fathers have so much admired the sacrifice of Abraham. What a father's heart! And your holy countrywoman, the mother of St. Symphorian, with whose holy act I

finish my book!\*

O God, my mother, let us leave our children to the mercy of God, who has left his Son to our mercy. Let us offer to him the life of ours, as he has given for us the life of his. In general, we should keep our eyes fixed on the heavenly Providence, in whose dispensations we ought to acquiesce with all the humility of our heart.

We must be strong and constant near the cross and on the cross itself, if it please God to put us there. Blessed are the crucified, for they shall be glorified. Yes, my dearest mother, our heritage in this life is in the cross, and in the next it will be in glory.

My God! dearest mother, how I wish you perfection! And what courage have I, and what hope in that sovereign goodness, and in his Holy Mother, *that your life will be all hidden with Christ in God* †—to speak with our Lord. God bless you, and mark your heart with the eternal sign of his pure love! We must become, very humbly, saints, and spread everywhere the good and sweet odour of our charity. May God make us burn with his holy love, and despise all for that! May our Lord be the repose of our heart, and of our body! Every day I learn not to do my own will, and to do what I do not want. Rest in peace in the two arms of Divine Providence, and in the bosom of the protection of our Lady.

\* *The Introduction.*

† Col. i 3.

## LETTER XXXIII.

TO A LADY.

*Consolation to a mother on the death of her son in childhood.*

3rd January, 1613.

I ASSURE you, dearest daughter, that your affliction has touched me deeply, being assured that it has been very severe; insomuch as your spirit, like that of the rest of men, not seeing the end and intention for which things happen, receives them not in the way they are, but in the way they are felt.

Behold, my dear child, your son is in safety, he possesses eternal happiness! there he is, saved and secured from the risk in which we see so many, of losing his soul. Tell me, I ask, might he not with age have become very wicked, might you not have suffered much pain from him as so many mothers suffer from theirs? For, my dear child, we often suffer pain from those from whom we least expect it; and see how God has withdrawn him from all these perils, and made him enjoy the triumph without the battle, and reap the fruits of glory without labour.

Do you not think, my dear daughter, that your vows and devotions are well fulfilled? You made them for him, but in order that he might stay with you in this vale of tears. Our Lord, who understands better what is good for us than we do, has heard your prayers in favour of the child for whom you made

them, but at the sacrifice of the temporal satisfactions which you sought.

Truly I quite approve the confession you make, that it is for your sins that this child has departed, because it comes from humility: but all the same I do not consider that it is founded in truth. No, my dear child, it is not to punish you, but to favour this child, that God has saved him early. You have pain from this death, but the child has great gain from it, you have received temporal pain and the child eternal joy. At the end of our days, when our eyes are cleared, we shall see that this life is so trifling that we ought not to have pitied those who lost it soon: the shortest is the best, if it leads us to the eternal.

So then, behold your little child in heaven with the Angels and the Holy Innocents. He is grateful to you for the care you had of him during the little time he was in your charge, and specially for the devotions made for him: in exchange he prays God for you and pours forth a thousand desires over your life, that it may be more and more according to the will of God, and that so you may be able to gain the life which he enjoys. Remain then in peace, my dearest daughter, and keep your heart ever in heaven, where you have this fine (*brave*) little saint. Persevere in always wishing to love more faithfully the sovereign goodness of our Saviour; and I pray that he may be your consolation for ever. I am, without end, your most humble, very affectionate and faithful godfather and servant.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO A LADY.

*On the death of her son.*

*Ancey, 2nd December, 1619.*

THE father confessor of Sainte-Claire de Grenoble has just told me that you have been extremely ill, my dear daughter, after having seen the dear N. pass away, and that you have been healed of a great infirmity. I see amidst all this your well-beloved heart, which, with a great submission to the Divine Providence, says that all is good, since the fatherly hand of this supreme goodness has given all these blows.

O how happy is this child, to have flown to heaven like a little angel, after having but just touched the earth! What a pledge have you there above, my dearest daughter! But, I am sure, you will have treated heart to heart with our Saviour about this affair; and he will already have holily soothed the natural tenderness of your maternity, and you will already often have said with all your heart the filial words taught us by our Lord: *Yes, eternal Father, for thus it has pleased thee to do, and it is good to be so.\**

O my daughter, if you have done like this, *you are happily dead in this Divine Saviour with this child, and your life is hidden with Christ in God; and when the Saviour shall appear who is your life, then shall*

\* Matt. xi. 26.

*you also appear with him in glory.\** This is the way the Holy Spirit speaks in the Scriptures.

We share in the sufferings and death of those we love by this affection which holds us to them, and when they suffer and die in our Lord, and we acquiesce with patience in their sufferings for the sake of him who has willed to suffer and die for love of us, we suffer and die with them; all this well heaped up, my dearest child, is spiritual riches incomparable; and we shall know it one day, when, for these light labours, we shall see eternal rewards.

Yet, my dearest daughter, as you have willingly been ill, so long as God has wished it, be cured now in good earnest, as he wishes you to be. And I beg him ever, my dearest daughter, that we may be his, without reserve or exception, in health and in sickness, tribulation and prosperity, life and death, time and eternity. I salute your filial heart, and am your, &c.

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## LETTER XXXV.

TO A LADY.

*Consolation on the death of her son. Example of our Lady  
at the foot of the Cross.*

23rd August, 1619.

HAVING known your affliction, my dearest daughter, my soul has been touched by it according to the measure of the cordial love which God has given me for you :

\* Col. iii. 3, 4.

for I see you, it seems to me, greatly attacked by sorrow, as a mother separated from her only, and truly amiable son.

But I am sure you reflect well, and are quite convinced, that this separation is not of long duration, since we all are going, with great steps, thither, where this son finds himself in the arms, as we may hope, of the mercy of God. On this account you should assuage and soften, as far as is possible by reason, the sorrow which nature causes you.

But I speak to you with too much reserve, my dearest daughter. You have so long desired to serve God, and have so long been taught at the foot of the cross, that not only do you accept this cross patiently, but, I am sure, sweetly and amorously, for the sake of him who bore his unto death, and of her who having but an only Son, son of incomparable love, saw him with her eyes full of tears, and her heart full of grief (but grief sweet and gentle), for the salvation of you and of all, die upon the cross.

Finally, my dearest child, you are deprived and despoiled of the most precious garment you had. Bless the name of God who had given it you, and has taken it back, and his Divine Majesty will take the place of your child. As for me, I have already prayed to God for the departed, and will continue, according to the great desires I have for your soul, which I pray the eternal goodness of our Lord to make abound with blessings, and I am without reserve all yours, my dearest daughter, and your, &c.

## LETTER XXXVI.

TO MADAM, WIFE OF PRESIDENT BRULART.

*Consolation on the death of a son who died in the Indies, in the King's service.*

21st May, 1615.

O HOW my soul suffers with your heart, my dearest mother! for I seem to see it, this poor mother's heart, all clouded with an excessive trouble; and at the same time a trouble which we can neither blame nor think strange, when we consider how amiable was this son, whose second separation from us is the subject of our sorrow.

My dearest mother, it is true that this son was one of the most desirable that ever was: all those who knew him recognized it, and knew that it was so. But is not this a great part of the consolation which we should take now, my dearest mother? For, truly, it seems that those whose life is so worthy of memory and esteem still live after death, since one has such pleasure in recalling them, and in representing them to the minds of those who are living.

This son, my dearest mother, had already made a great separation from us, having voluntarily deprived himself of his native clime, to go to serve his God and his King in another and new world. His generosity had animated him to this; and yours had made you agree to so honourable a resolution, for which you had renounced the delight of ever seeing him again in



this life, and there remained to you only the hope of letters from time to time. See then, my dearest mother, how he has, under the good pleasure of Divine Providence, departed from this other world to that which is the oldest and most desirable of all, and to which we must all go in our time, and where you will see him sooner than you would have done had he stayed in this new world amid the labours of the conquests which he was intending to make for his King and the Church.

In a word, he has ended his days in his duty and in the fulfilment of his oath. This sort of death is excellent, and you must not doubt that the great God has made it happy for him, as, from his cradle, he had continually favoured him with his grace to make him live in a most Christian manner. Console yourself then, my dearest mother, and comfort your mind, adoring the Divine Providence which does all very sweetly: and though the motives of his decrees are hidden from us, still the truth of his sweet goodness (*débonnairété*) is certain to us, and obliges us to believe that he does all things in perfect kindness.

You are, as it were, on the eve of taking sail to go to where this dear child is. When you are there you would not wish him to be in the Indies; for you will see that he will be much better off with angels and saints than with tigers and barbarians. But while waiting the hour to sail, feed your maternal heart by the consideration of the most holy eternity in which he is, and which you are quite near. And instead of

writing to him, sometimes speak to God for him, and he will quickly know all you want him to know, and will receive all the assistance that you will give him by your desires and prayers, as soon as you have made them and lodged them in the hands of his Divine Majesty.

Christians are very wrong to be so little Christian as they are, and to break so cruelly the laws of charity to obey those of fear : but, my dearest mother, you must pray to God for those who do this great evil, and apply that prayer to the soul of your departed. It is the most agreeable prayer we can make to him who made a like prayer on the cross, to which his most Holy Mother answered with all her heart, loving him with a very ardent charity.

You cannot think how this blow has struck my heart, for, in fine, he was my dear brother, and had loved me extremely. I have prayed for him, and will do so always, and for you, my dearest mother, to whom I wish to render all my life, in a special manner, honour and love on behalf also of this deceased brother, whose immortal friendship comes to beg me to be more and more your, &c.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO A LADY.

*We must not stretch our curiosity so far as to wish to know what is, after death, the fate of a person we have much loved.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—Having received your letter and message, I will tell you that I know distinctly the qualities of your heart, and above all its ardour and strength in loving and cherishing what it loves; it is this which makes you speak so much to our Lord of this dear departed, and which impels you to these desires of knowing where he is.

But, my dear mother, we must repress these longings which proceed from the excess of this amorous passion: and when you surprise your mind in this occupation, you must immediately, and even with vocal prayers, return to our Lord, and say to him this or the like: O Lord, how sweet is your providence! how good is your mercy! Ah! how happy is this child to have fallen into your fatherly arms, where he cannot but have good, wherever he is!

Yes, my dear mother: for you must take great care to think of no other place than Paradise or Purgatory; thank God, there is no cause to think otherwise. Draw back, then, thus your mind, and afterwards turn it to actions of love towards our Lord crucified.

When you recommend this child to the Divine Majesty, say to him simply: Lord, I recommend to you the child of my womb: but much more the child

of your mercy, born of my blood, but born again of yours. And then pass on; for if you permit your soul to amuse itself with this object, adapted and agreeable to its senses and to its inferior and natural powers, it will never be willing to tear itself away; and under pretence of prayers of piety, it will give itself up to certain natural complacencies and satisfactions, which will deprive you of the time for employing yourself with the supernatural and sovereign object of your love. You must certainly moderate these ardours of natural affection, which only serve to trouble our mind and distract our heart.

So, then, now, my dearest mother, let us withdraw our mind into our heart, and bring it to its duty of loving God most solely: and let us allow it no frivolous self-busying, either about what passes in this world or what passes in the other; but having served out to creatures what we owe them of love and charity let us refer all to that primary, mastering love which we owe to our Creator, and let us conform ourselves to his Divine will. I am, very affectionately, my dear mother, your most faithful and affectionate child, &c.

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LETTER XXXVIII.

TO A LADY.

*On the too great fear of death.*

7th April, 1617.

MADAM,—On this first opportunity which I have of writing to you, I keep my promise, and present you

some means for softening the fear of death which gives you such great terrors in your sicknesses and child-bearings: in this there is no sin, but still there is damage to your heart, which cannot, troubled by this passion, join itself so well by love with its God, as it would do if not so much tormented.

1°. Then, I assure you, that if you persevere in the exercise of devotion, as I see you do, you will find yourself, by little and little, much relieved of this torment; so that your soul, thus exempt from evil affections, and uniting itself more and more with God, will find itself less attached to this mortal life, and to the empty satisfactions which it gives.

Continue, then, the devout life, as you have begun, and go always from well to better in the road in which you are; and you will see that after some time these errors will grow weak, and will not trouble you so much.

2°. Exercise yourself often in the thoughts of the great sweetness and mercy with which God our Saviour receives souls in their death, when they have trusted themselves to him in their life, and have tried to serve and love him, each one in his vocation. *How good art thou, Lord, to them that are of a right heart.*

3°. Often lift up your heart by a holy confidence, mingled with a profound humility towards our Redeemer; saying: *I am miserable, Lord, and you will receive my misery into the bosom of your mercy, and you will draw me, with your paternal hand, to the enjoyment of your inheritance. I am frail, and vile, and abject: but you*

*will love me in that day, because I have hoped in you, and have desired to be yours.*

4°. Excite in yourself as much as possible the love of Paradise and of the celestial life, and make some considerations on this subject, which you will find sufficiently marked in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, in the meditations on the glory of heaven and the choice of Paradise: for in proportion as you esteem eternal happiness, will you have less fear for leaving this mortal and perishable life.

5°. Read no books or parts of books in which death, and judgment, and hell, are spoken of: for, thanks to God, you have quite resolved to live in a Christian manner, and have no need to be pushed to it by motives of terror and fear.

6°. Often make acts of love towards our Lady, the Saints, and the Angels: make yourself familiar with them, often addressing them words of praise and love; for having much intercourse with the citizens of the divine, heavenly Jerusalem, it will trouble you less to quit those of the earthly or lower city of the world.

7°. Often adore, praise and bless the most holy death of our Lord crucified, and place all your trust in his merit, by which your death will be made happy, and often say: *O divine death of my sweet Jesus, thou shalt bless mine and it shall be blessed; I bless thee and thou shalt bless me. O death more dear than life!* Thus St. Charles, in his last illness had placed in his sight the picture of Christ's Tomb, and of his prayer

in the garden, to console himself in this article of death by the death and passion of his Redeemer.

8°. Reflect sometimes, how that you are daughter of the Church, and rejoice in this; for the children of this mother who are willing to live according to her laws always die happily; and as says the blessed Mother (St.) Teresa, it is a great consolation at death to have been a child of Holy Church.

9°. Finish all your prayers in hope, saying: Lord, thou art my hope, *my soul trusteth in thee.*\* My God, who *hath hoped* in thee and *hath been confounded*?† *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confound.*‡ In your ejaculatory prayer during the day, and in receiving the Blessed Sacrament, use always words of love and hope towards our Lord, such as: *You are my Father, O Lord! O God! you are the Spouse of my soul, the King of my love and the well beloved of my soul. O good Jesus! you are my dear master, my help, my refuge.*

10°. Consider often that the persons whom you love most, and to be separated from whom would trouble you, are the persons with whom you will be eternally in heaven: for instance, your husband, your little John, your father: Oh! this little boy, who will be, God helping, one day happy in that eternal life, in which he will enjoy my happiness, and rejoice over it; and I shall enjoy his, and rejoice over it, and we shall never more be separated! So of your husband, your

\* Ps. lvi. 2.

† Eccus ii. 11.

‡ Ps. xxx. 1.

father, and others. You will find it all the more easy because all your dearest serve God and fear him. And because you are a little melancholy, see in the *Introduction* what I say of sadness and the remedies against it.

Here, my dear lady, you have what I can say on this subject for the present. I say it to you with a heart very affectionate towards yours, which I beg to love me and to recommend me often to the Divine mercy, as in return I will not cease to pray it to bless you. Live happy and joyous in heavenly love, and I am your, &c.



BOOK III.  
LETTERS TO WIDOWS.

LETTER I.

TO A COUSIN.

*He tells her of her husband's death, and gives her spiritual  
consolations.*

*28th September, 1613.*

My God! how deceitful is this life, Madam, my dearest cousin! and how short its consolations! They appear in a moment, and another moment carries them off: and but for the holy eternity in which all our days end, we should have cause to blame our human condition.

My dearest cousin, know that I write with a heart full of pain, on account of the loss which I have had, but still more on account of the lively sense which I have of the blow which this will be to your heart, when it hears the sad news of your widowhood so early, so unexpected, so lamentable.

If the multitude of those who will share your sorrow could lessen the bitterness of it, you would soon have

little left : for no one has known this excellent gentleman but contributes a special sorrow towards the acknowledgment of his merits.

But, my dearest cousin, all this cannot console you till after the strongest feeling has passed away. While this lasts God must sustain your soul and form its refuge and support. Well, this sovereign goodness, without doubt, my dearest cousin, will bow down to you, and will come into your heart, to aid and succour it in this tribulation, if you throw yourself into his arms and resign yourself into his fatherly hands.

It was God, my dearest cousin, who gave you this husband : it is God who has taken him back. He is bound to be pitiful towards you in the griefs which the just affections, given you for your marriage, will henceforth cause you in this privation.

This is, in a word, all that I can say to you. Our nature is so made that we die at an unforeseen moment, and cannot escape this condition : wherefore we must take patience, and use our reason to soften the evil which we cannot avoid ; then look at God and his eternity, in which all our losses will be made up, and our union, interrupted by death, will be restored.

May God and your good angel inspire you with every holy consolation, my dearest cousin. I will beg it of his Divine Majesty, and will contribute to the repose of the soul of the dear departed many holy sacrifices : and to your service, my dearest cousin, I sincerely offer you all that is in my power, without reserve. For I am, and wish even more strongly than

ever to profess to be, Madam my dearest cousin, your,  
&c.

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LETTER II.

TO AN AUNT.

*Consolations on the death of her husband. The perfection of true friendship is only found in Paradise.*

MADAM MY AUNT,—Did I not know that your virtue can give you the consolations and resolutions necessary to support with Christian courage the loss which you have had, I should try to give you some reasons for it in this letter: if it were required I would bear them to you myself. But I consider that you have so much charity and fear of God that, seeing his good pleasure and holy will, you will conform yourself to it, and will soften your sorrow by the consideration of the evil of this world, which is so miserable that but for our frailty we should rather praise God when he takes from it our friends than trouble ourselves about it. It is necessary that all, one after another, should quit it in the order which is appointed; and the first are the best off, when they have lived with care of their salvation and soul, like my uncle and elder, whose actions have been so agreeable and profitable to all his friends, that we, who have been the most familiar and intimate, cannot refrain from much regretting the separation. Such sorrow is not forbidden us provided that we moderate it by the hope which we have of not

remaining separated, but in a little time of following him to heaven, the place of our repose, God giving us this grace. There shall we form and enjoy without end good and Christian friendships, which in this world we have only begun. This is the chief thought our friends departed require from us, in which thought I beg you to keep yourself, leaving inordinate sorrow for souls which have not such hopes. Meanwhile, Madam my aunt, I have such love for the memory of the departed, and for your service, that you will greatly increase the obligation I am under if you do me the honour to command me in all liberty, and to employ me in all assurance. Do this, I beseech you with all my heart, and I beg our Lord to increase in you his holy consolations, and to fill you with the graces which are wished you by your, &c.

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LETTER III.

TO MADAME RIVOLAT, WIDOW.

*The Saint consoles her in the death of her husband.*

LEARNING that you are widowed, my dear daughter, I suffer with the pain you have suffered; but still I exhort you not to let yourself be carried away with sorrow, for the grace which God has given you to wish to serve him obliges you to console yourself in him; and the children of the love of God have so much trust in his goodness that they never become desolate, having a refuge in which they find all con-

tent. He who has learnt how to draw from that fountain cannot long remain thirsty from the passions of this miserable life. I know that you are ill, but, my dear child, as your pains increase you must increase your courage, thinking that he who, to show his love for you, has chosen the death of the cross, will draw you more and more to his love and his glory by the cross of tribulation which he sends you. Meanwhile I pray our Lord for you and your departed, and beg you to recommend me to his Divine mercy. I am in him your humble, affectionate, &c.

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## LETTER IV.

TO A LADY.

*Consolation on the death of her husband. He speaks of her children.*

MADAM,—You cannot think how sensibly I feel your affliction. I honoured with a very particular affection this dear departed gentleman, for many reasons, but chiefly for his virtue and piety. How grievous that, at a time when there is so great a dearth of such souls among men of his rank, we should see and suffer these losses, so injurious to the commonwealth.

Still, my dear lady, considering all things, we must accommodate our hearts to the condition of life in which we are: it is a perishing and mortal life, and death which rules over this life keeps no regular course—it seizes sometimes here, sometimes there,

without choice or any method, the good among the bad, and the young among the old.

O, how happy are they who, being always on their guard against death, find themselves always ready to die, so that they may live again eternally in the life where there is no more death! Our beloved dead was of this number, I well know. That alone, Madam, is enough to console us; for at last, after a few days, soon or late, in a few years, we shall follow him in this passage, and the friendships and fellowships begun in this world will be taken up again never to be broken off. Meanwhile, let us have patience and wait with courage till the hour of our departure strikes to go where these friends already are; and as we have loved them cordially let us continue to love them, doing for their love what they used to wish us to do, and what they now wish for on our behalf.

Doubtless, my dear lady, the greatest desire your deceased had at his departure was, that you should not long remain in the grief which his absence would cause you, but try to moderate, for love of him, the passion which love of him excited in you. And now, in the happiness which he enjoys, or certainly expects, he wishes you a holy consolation, and wishes you to save your eyes for a better purpose than tears, and your mind for a more desirable occupation than sorrow.

He has left you precious pledges of your marriage; keep your eyes to look after their bringing up, keep your mind to raise up theirs. Do this, Madam, for

the love of this dear husband, and imagine that he asked you for this at his departure, and still requires this service from you; for truly he would have done it if he could, and he now desires it. The rest of your griefs may be according to your heart which is in this world, but not according to his, which is in the other.

And since true friendship delights to satisfy the just desires of the friend, so now in order to please your husband be consoled; calm your mind, and raise your heart. And if this counsel which I give you with entire sincerity is agreeable to you, put it in practice. Prostrate yourself before your Saviour, acquiesce in his ordinance; consider the soul of this dear departed, which wishes from yours a true and Christian resolution, and abandon yourself altogether to the heavenly providence of the Saviour of your soul, your protector, who will help and succour you, and will, in the end, unite you with your dead, not as wife with husband, but as heiress of heaven with co-heir, and as faithful lover with her beloved.

I write this, Madam, without leisure, and almost without breath, offering you that very loving service of mine which has long been yours, and also that which the merits and the goodness of your husband towards me require from my soul.

God be in the midst of your heart. Amen.

## LETTER V.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*Duties of widows relatively to their salvation; means of gaining that end.*

*Annecey, Feast of the Holy Cross, 3rd May, 1604.*

MADAME,—I write to assure you more and more that I will carefully keep the promise which I made you to write as often as possible. The more I am separated from you exteriorly the more I feel myself united with you interiorly, and I will never cease to pray our good God to please to perfect you in his holy work, that is, the good desire and design of reaching the perfection of Christian life. This desire you must cherish and tenderly nourish in your heart, as a blessing of the Holy Spirit and a spark of his Divine fire. I have seen a tree which was planted by the blessed St. Dominic at Rome: every one goes to see it, and is fond of it for the sake of the planter. In the same way having seen in you the tree of the desire of sanctity, which our Lord has planted in your soul, I cherish it tenderly, and take more pleasure in regarding it now than when present; and I exhort you to do the same and to say with me: may God give you increase, O lovely tree! Divine heavenly seed, may God grant you to produce your fruit unto maturity: and when you shall have produced it, may God guard you from the wind which makes the fruits fall to earth for vile beasts to eat. Madame, this desire should be in you like the orange



trees of the coast of Genoa, which almost all the year are covered with fruit and flowers and leaves together, for your desire should always fructify by the occasions which offer of fulfilling it every day, and yet your desire for objects and means to advance further should never cease. These wishes are flowers of the tree of your design; the leaves are the frequent acknowledgments of your weakness, which preserve both the good works and the good desire. This desire is *one* of the pillars of your tabernacle; the other is love of your widowhood, a holy love, desirable for as many reasons as there are stars in heaven, and without which widowhood is contemptible and false. St. Paul commands us to *honour the widows who are widows indeed*;\* but those who love not their widowhood are not widows, save in appearance, their heart is married. These are not they of whom it is said: *Blessing, will I bless the widow*;† and elsewhere: *God is the judge, protector and defender of widows.*‡ Blessed be God who has given you this dear holy love. Increase it every day more and more, and the consolation of it will increase for you at the same time, since all the building of your happiness is supported on these two pillars. Look, at least once a month, to see whether one or the other be not weakened; use for this some meditation or consideration similar to that of which I send you a copy, and which I have communicated with some fruit to other souls which I have in charge. Do not, how-

\* 1 Tim. v. 3.

† Ps. cxxx. 15.

‡ Ps. lxxvii. 6.

ever, tie yourself to this same meditation ; for I do not send it you for that purpose, but only to show you the direction of this monthly examen and trial of yourself, so that you may learn more easily to get advantage from it. If you like better to repeat this same meditation it will not be useless to you ; but I say, “ if you like better,” for in all and everywhere I wish you to have a holy liberty of spirit about the *means* of perfection. If the two columns are preserved and strengthened, it matters not much how this is done. Keep yourself from scruples, and rest entirely on what I have said to you by word of mouth ; for I have said it in our Lord. Keep yourself constantly in the presence of God by the means which you have. Keep yourself from eager solitudes and disquietudes, for there is nothing which more hinders us from journeying to perfection. Throw your heart gently into the wounds of our Lord, and not violently. Have an extreme confidence in his mercy and goodness, and assurance that he will not abandon you ; and for this cease not to keep yourself to his holy cross. After the love of our Lord I recommend to you that of his spouse, the Church, this dear and sweet dove, which can alone produce and bring forth little doves for the Spouse. Praise God a hundred times a day for being a daughter of the Church, like Mother (St.) Teresa, who often repeated this sentiment at the hour of her death with extreme consolation. Cast your eyes on the bridegroom and the bride, and say to the beloved : O, to how lovely a bride art thou espoused ! And to

the Spouse : O, to how divine a lover art thou wedded ! Have great feeling for all the pastors and preachers of the Church, and behold them spread over all the face of the earth ; for there is no province in the world without them. Pray God for them, that while saving themselves they may procure the salvation of many souls ; and here I beg you never to forget me, since God has given me such strong will never to forget you. I send you a little manuscript on the perfection of a Christian life. I have made it, not directly for you, but for several others ; still you will see in what you can make it useful for yourself. Write to me, I pray you, as often as ever you can, and with all the confidence possible : for the extreme desire which I have of your good and advancement, make me pleased to learn often what you are doing. Recommend me to our Lord, for I have more need of it than any one in the world. I beseech him to give abundantly of his holy love to you and to all belonging to you. I am for ever, and beseech you to consider me, your very assured and devoted servant in Jesus Christ.

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## LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

*He sends a picture representing the little Jesus with our Lady and St. Anne.*

*29th May, 1605.*

BEHOLD, my child, this little picture which I send you : it represents your holy abbess while still in the

monastery of married persons, and her good mother who is come from the convent of widows to visit her. Look at the daughter how she keeps her eyes cast down : it is because she cannot see those of the child ; the mother on the contrary lifts them up, because they rest on those of the little darling. Virgins only lift their eyes, to see those of the spouse, and widows lower them when they cannot have this honour. Your abbess is gloriously adorned with a crown on her head, but looks down on some little flowers scattered on the step of her seat.

The good grandmother has near her on the earth a basket filled with fruits. I think that they are the actions of holiness, the little and humble virtues which she wishes to give to her pet as soon as she has him in her arms. Meanwhile, you see that the little Jesus bends and inclines himself towards his aged grandmother, widow as she is, and with poor head-dress and simply clad. He holds a world, which he turns gently away with one hand, because he knows well that it is not suitable for widows ; but with the other he gives her his holy benediction.

Keep yourself near this widow, and like her have your little basket. Keep your arms and your eyes towards the child ; his mother your abbess will give him to you in your turn : He will very willingly incline himself towards you, and will bless you munificently. Ah ! how I desire him, my daughter ! This wish is spread abroad in my soul, where it will remain eternally. Live joyfully in God, and salute very

humbly in my name, Madame your abness, and dear mistress. May sweet Jesus be enthroned in your heart and on mine together ! May he reign and live there for ever ! Amen.

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LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

*Humility is the virtue proper for widows ; in what it consists.*

*The great utility of meditating on the life and death of our Lord. Remedies for temptations against faith. Advice on the exercise of virtues.*

1st November, 1605.

MY GOD ! what heartiness and passion I have in the service of your soul ! You could not sufficiently believe it, my dear sister. I have so much that this alone suffices to convince me that it is from our Lord, for it is not possible, I think, that all the world together could give me so much ; at least, I have never seen so much in the world.

To-day is the Feast of All Saints, and at our solemn matins, seeing our Lord begin the beatitudes with poverty of spirit, which St. Augustine interprets of the holy and most desirable virtue of humility, I remember that you had asked me to send you something about humility. I think I said nothing in my last letter, though it was very ample and perhaps too long. Now, God has given me so many things to

write to you, that if I had time I think I should say wonders.

In the first place, my dear sister, it comes to my mind that doctors give widows, as their proper virtue, holy humility. Virgins have theirs, so have martyrs, doctors, pastors—each his or her own, like the order of their knighthood : and all must have had humility, for they would not have been exalted had they not been humbled. But to widows belongs, before all, humility ; for what can puff up the widow with pride ? She has no longer her virginity. (This can, however, be amply supplied for by a great widowly humility. It is much better to be a widow with plenty of oil in our lamp, by desiring nothing but humility and charity, than a virgin without oil, or with little oil.) She has no longer that which gives the highest value to your sex in the estimation of the world ; she has no longer her husband, who was her honour, and whose name she has taken. What more remains to glorify herself in, except God ! O happy glory ! O precious crown ! In the garden of the church widows are compared to violets, little and low flowers, of no striking colour, nor of very intense perfume, but marvellously sweet. O how lovely a flower is the Christian widow, little and low by humility ! She is not brilliant in the eyes of the world ; for she avoids them, and no longer adorns herself to draw them on her ; and why should she desire the eyes when she no longer desires the hearts.

The Apostle orders his dear disciple to *honour the*

*widows who are widows indeed.*\* And who are widows indeed save those who are such in heart and mind—that is, who have their heart married to no creature? Our Lord says not to-day: Blessed are the clean of body, but of heart; and praises not the poor; but the poor in spirit. Widows are to be honoured when they are such in heart and mind; what does *widow* mean except deserted and forlorn—that is, miserable, poor and little? Those, then, who are poor, miserable and little in mind and heart, are to be praised. All this means those who are humble, of whom our Lord is the protector.

But what is humility? Is it the knowledge of this misery and poverty? Yes, says our St. Bernard; but this is moral and human humility. What then is Christian humility. It is the *love* of this poverty and abjection, contemplating these in our Lord. You know that you are a very wretched (*pauvrette*) and weak widow? Love this miserable state; make it your glory to be nothing; be glad of it, since your misery becomes an object for the goodness of God to show his mercy in.

Amongst beggars those who are the most miserable, and whose sores are the largest and most loathsome, think themselves the best beggars, and the most likely to draw alms. We are but beggars; the most miserable are the best off; the mercy of God willingly looks on them.

Let us humble ourselves, I beseech you, and plead

\* 1 Tim. v. 3.

only our sores and miseries at the gate of the Divine mercy; but remember to plead them with joy, comforting yourself in being quite empty, and quite a widow, that our Lord may fill you with his kingdom. Be mild and affable with every one, except with those who would take away your glory, which is your wretchedness and your perfect widowhood. *I glory in my infirmities,\** says the Apostle; and *it is better for me to die than lose my glory.* Do you see, he would rather die than lose his infirmities, which are his glory.

You must carefully guard your misery and your littleness; for God regards it, as he did that of the Blessed Virgin. *Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart.†* If he sees our littleness in our hearts, he will give us great graces. This humility preserves chastity, whence, in the Canticles, that lovely soul is called the lily of the valleys. Be then joyously humble before God, but be joyously humble also before the world. Be very glad that the world makes no account of you; if it esteems you, mock at it gaily, and laugh at its judgment, and at your misery which is judged; if it esteems you not, console yourself joyously, because in this, at least, the world follows truth.

As for the exterior, do not affect visible humility, but also do not run away from it: embrace it, and ever joyously. I approve the lowering of ourselves sometimes to mean offices, even towards inferiors and

\* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

† 1 Kings, xvi. 7.



proud persons, towards the sick and poor, towards our own people at home and abroad; but it must ever be ingenuously and joyously. I repeat it often, because it is the key of this mystery for you and for me. I might rather have said *charitably*, for charity, says St. Bernard, is joyous; and this he says after St. Paul. Humble services, and matters of exterior humility are only the bark, but this preserves the fruit.

Continue your communions and exercises, as I have written to you. Keep your soul very closely this year to the meditation of the life and death of our Lord: it is the gate of heaven; if you keep his company you will learn his disposition. Have a great and long-suffering courage; do not lose it for mere noise, and specially not in temptations against faith. Our enemy is a great clatterer, do not trouble yourself at all about him; he cannot hurt you, I well know. Mock at him and let him go on. Do not strive with him, ridicule him, for it is all nothing. He has howled round about the Saints, and made plenty of hubbub; but to what purpose? In spite of it all, there they are, seated in the place which he has lost, the wretch!

I want you to look at the 41st chapter of the *Way of Perfection* by the blessed Mother St. Teresa, for it will help you to understand well the doctrine which I have told you so often, that we must not be too minute in the exercises of virtues; that we must walk open-heartedly, frankly, naïvely, after the old fashion (*à la vieille Française*), with liberty, in good

faith, in a broad way (*grosso modo*). I fear the spirit of constraint and melancholy. No, my dear child, I desire that you should have a heart large and noble, in the way of our Lord, but humble, gentle; and without laxness.

I commend myself to the little but penetrating prayers of our Celse-Bénigne; and if Aimée begins to give me some little wishes, I shall hold them very dear. I give you, and your widow's heart, and your children, every day to our Lord, when offering his Son. Pray for me, my dear child, that one day we may see one another with all the saints in Paradise: my desire to love you and to be loved by you has no less measure than eternity. May the sweet Jesus will to give us this in his love and dilection! Amen. I am, then, and wish to be eternally, entirely yours in Jesus Christ.

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## LETTER VIII.

TO MADAME THE COUNTESS DE DALET.

*Duties of a widow towards her parents and children. The love of parents has great claims.*

25th April, 1621.

MADAME,—I should be much troubled in writing to you on this present subject, if I were not authorized by Madame, your mother; for on what ground could I put my hand to what passes between you two, and how appeal to your conscience, knowing that you are the

only and worthy daughter of a worthy mother, who is full of sense, prudence, and piety? But since I must, then, under this authorization, I will say, Madame, that your mother tells me all that she has told you herself and got told you by many excellent persons (in comparison with whom I am nothing) to bring you round to the desire she has that you deprive her not of your filial help, in these great straits, to which the occurrences you know of have reduced her. She cannot bear to see her estate fall under the burden, and above all, for the want of your help, which she considers to be all that is necessary.

She proposes three plans for this: either that you retire altogether into religion, in order that the creditors may no longer want you as security, and that she may have the free disposal of your children's property; or that you marry again with the advantages which are offered you; or that you remain with her and keep a common purse. She gives in her letter the exceptions you take to the first two plans. She says you have vowed your chastity to God, and that you have four very little children, of whom two are girls, but about the third plan I see nothing in her letter.

As to the first I do not want to interpose my judgment on the question whether your vow obliges you not to ask a dispensation (although she alleges a great precipitation which may have prevented due consideration), for indeed the purity of chastity is of such high price that whoever has vowed it is very happy to

keep it, and there is nothing to prefer to it except the necessity of the public good.

As to the second, I do not know whether you can lawfully give up that care of your children which God has required from you in making you their mother, and they being so little.

But, as to the third, Madame, I say that your purse ought to be common with your mother, in a case of such great necessity. O God! it is the least we owe to father and mother. I fancy I can indeed discern some reason why. I think a daughter, so placed with children, may keep her purse to herself; but I do not know whether this reason exists in your case: and if it does, it must be very clear and strong, and bear to be seen and examined thoroughly. Amongst enemies, extreme necessity makes all things common; but amongst friends, and such friends as daughters and mothers, we must not wait for extreme necessity, for the command of God urges us too much. In such cases we must lift up eyes and heart to the providence of God, who returns abundantly all that we give according to his holy commandment.

I say too much, Madame; for I had no right to speak on this, except to refer your dear conscience, in this regard, to those to whom you confide it.

For the rest, as to your spiritual exercises, your mother is content that you perform them after your customary manner, except your retreats at *Sainte-Marie*, which she wishes limited to the great feasts of the year, to three days in each forty. You may also

be content with this, and supply by spiritual retreats at home, the length of those you could make at *Sainte-Marie*.

O my God! dear lady, what we should do for fathers and mothers! and how lovingly must we support the excess, the zeal and the ardour, I had almost said the *importunity* of their love! These mothers,—they are altogether wonderful (*admirables*): they would like, I think, always to carry their children, particularly the only child, at their breasts. They often feel jealous if one takes a little amusement out of their presence; they consider that they are never enough loved, and that the love which is due to them can never be full-measured except when beyond proper measure. How can we mend this? We must have patience, and do, as nearly as we can, all that is required to correspond with it. God requires only certain days, certain hours, and his presence is quite content that we also be present with fathers and mothers: but these are more exacting. They require many more days and hours, and an undivided presence. Ah! God is so good that, condescending to this, he reckons the accommodation of our will to our mother's as accommodation to his, provided his good pleasure is the principal end of our actions.

Well, then, you have Moses and the prophets; that is, so many excellent servants of God: hear them. And as for me, I do wrong to occupy you so long, but I have a little pleasure in speaking with a pure and chaste soul, and one against which there is no com-

plaint, except for the excess of devotion ; a rare complaint, so rare and admirable that I cannot help loving and honouring her who is accused of it, or being for ever, Madame, yours, &c.

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LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

*What assistance children who are masters of their fortune and who have a family owe to their parents.*

11th May, 1621.

MADAME,—It is in the presence of God that I write you this letter, since it is to tell you what you ought to do for his greater glory in the matters you have written about. After invoking, then, his Holy Spirit, I say that I see no just occasion in all you have told me, or your mother has told me, for breaking through the vow of chastity which you have made to God.

1. The keeping up of families is not a considerable cause, except for princes, when their posterity is required for the public weal ; and even if you were a princess, or he that wants you a prince, it could be said to you : be satisfied with the posterity you have ; and to him : get posterity by another princess. In a word, the Holy Spirit has caused it to be distinctly declared that *no price is worthy of a continent soul*.\* Remain then so, since God has inspired you the will and graciously gives the power. This great God will

\* *Ecclus. xxvi. 20.*

bless your vow, your soul, and your body, consecrated to his name.

2. It is quite true that you are not at all obliged in justice to assist with your means the estate of your father, since by the law of the State your and your children's property is quite separate from that of your father, and he is in no actual necessity; and particularly since you have not really received any part of your dowry, which was promised only and not paid.

3. On the contrary, if it is true that without preventing your father's ruin you would ruin your children and their property, and yourself, if you took up the charges on his estate, you are obliged, at least by charity, *not* to do it; for what is the use of ruining one family without saving another, and applying a remedy to an irremediable evil, at your children's expense? If, then, you know that your help will be useless to the relief of your father, you are obliged not to give it, to the prejudice of your children.

4. But, Madame, if you can help him without injuring your children, as it seems, apparently, you can, since you are an only child; and as all you can save from being sold will come at last to your children, your father and mother being unable to have other heirs, then I think you ought to do it, for it would be only letting go your property with one hand, and taking it back with the other.

5. And even if you should straiten your circumstances in order to content Madame your mother, provided that it is not with too much loss to your

children, it would seem to me you ought even to do it for the respect and love you are obliged to bear her.

6. As for the rest, I think it would be more for your peace, and in accordance with the vow you have made of perpetual purity, to live apart, in your little way, on the condition that you often see your mother. Indeed, if I understand her letter right, she would not be grieved if you even became a religious, so long as you enabled her by your means to keep possession of the family property.

And in truth, as I am unwilling to counsel a second marriage, and unable to encourage the disposition which I see in this lady to live in grand style, and keep the house open for every kind of proper social amusement, I think it will be better for you to live apart; for there is nothing like separation of dwellings to preserve union of hearts between those of opposite (although good) characters and aims. This is my opinion, Madame, on the knowledge I have of the state of your affairs. Oh! if it had pleased God that I should have seen you at Lyons, what a consolation for me, and how much more certainly and clearly I should have been able to explain to you my ideas! But since it has not been so, I will wait to receive your reply, in case you may think I have failed to understand the matter you have proposed to me, and I will try to repair my defects. And I beg you, Madame, not to form any idea which may take away the liberty of writing to me, since I am and shall be entirely and without reserve your very humble and very affectionate



servant, who wishes you the highest of the graces of our Lord, and above all a continual progress in the most holy sweetness of charity, and the sacred humility of the most amiable Christian simplicity. I cannot prevent myself saying that I found what you said in your letter very sweet—namely, that your house is a common one and no better; for this is delightful in an age when the children of the world make such a great noise about their houses, their names, and their descent. Live always so, my dearest child, and glory only in the cross of our Lord, by which the world is crucified to you and you to the world. Amen. I call myself henceforth with all my heart, Madame, your, &c.

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## LETTER X.

TO A LADY.

*The virtues which spring in the midst of afflictions are the most solid.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I share by compassion in the bitter griefs you suffer, and yet I fail not to find much consolation in that you suffer them with a spirit of resignation. My dear mother, the virtues which grow in prosperity are generally delicate and weakly: and those in afflictions are strong and stable, just as the best vines are said to grow among stones.

I pray God ever to be in the midst of your heart, that it may not be overturned by such shocks, and

that sharing with you his cross, he may communicate his holy patience, and that Divine love which makes tribulations so precious.

I will never cease to invoke the help of this eternal Father for a daughter whom I honour and cherish as my mother.

I am, my dear mother, yours in our Lord, &c.

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## LETTER XI.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*On the choice of a director. Remedies for temptations against faith. Rules of conduct for the use of a Christian widow. Liberty of spirit.*

14th October, 1604.

MADAME,—May God give me as much power as I have will to make myself clearly understood in this letter! I am sure that I should give you consolation about part of what you want to know from me, and particularly in the two doubts which the enemy suggests to you on the choice you have made of me as your spiritual father. I will do what I can to express in a few words what I think necessary for you on this subject.

As to the first doubt, the choice you have made has all the marks of a good and legitimate election. The great movement of soul, which brought you to it almost by force, and with consolation; the consideration which I have given to it before consenting; the fact that neither of us trusted self, but used the judgment of your confessor, a good, wise and prudent man; that

we gave time for the first agitations of your conscience to grow quiet, supposing they were ill-founded; that the prayers, not of one or two days, but of many months, went before;—these are, undoubtedly, infallible signs that it was the will of God.

The movements of the bad spirit or the human spirit are of a very different kind. They are terrible and vehement, but without constancy. The first word they say in the ear of the soul is to avoid counsel; or if it takes counsel it must be that of people of no weight, and without experience. They hurry, they want to make a bargain without stating terms, and content themselves with a short prayer, which only serves as a pretext to decide the most important questions.

There is nothing like this in our action. It is neither you nor I that formed the contract: but a third person, who in this can have regarded only God. The difficulty I made in the beginning, which proceeded only from the deliberation which I was bound to give to it, ought completely to reassure you. For be certain it was from no want of a very great inclination to your spiritual service; this I had beyond words; but because in a thing of such consequence I wanted to follow neither your desire nor my inclination but God and Providence. Stop there, I beseech, and dispute no more with the enemy on this subject; tell him boldly that it is God who wanted it and did it. It was God who placed you under that first direction, profitable to you at that time; it is God who

has brought you to this, which, though the instrument of it is unworthy, he will make fruitful and useful to you.

As to the second doubt, my dearest sister, know that as I have just said, from the beginning of your conferring with me about your interior, God gave me a great love of your soul. When you opened yourself to me more particularly, it was an obligation on my soul to cherish yours more and more, which made me write to you that God had given me to you. I do not believe that anything could be added to the affection I felt in my soul, and above all when praying to God for you.

But now, my dear child, a certain new quality has developed which I seem unable to name. I can only say its effect is a great interior sweetness which I feel in wishing you the perfection of the love of God, and other spiritual benedictions. No, I do not add a single line to the truth; I speak before the God of my heart and yours: every affection has its particular difference from others: that which I have for you has a certain specialty which immensely consoles me, and which, to say all, is extremely profitable to me. Hold that for the truest truth, and doubt it no more. I did not mean to say so much, but one word brings on another, and besides I think you will apply it properly.

It is remarkable, I think, my child, that the holy church of God, in imitation of her Spouse, does not teach us to pray for ourselves in particular, but always

for ourselves and for our Christian brethren : *Give us*, she says : *grant us*, and such like terms, which include many. I had never happened to think, under this general form of speech, of any particular person : but since I left Dijon, under this form, *us*, several persons who have recommended themselves to me have come into my mind,—yourself almost always the first ; and when not the first, which is rarely, then the last, to dwell more on it. Can I say more than that ? But, do not communicate this to any one ; for I say a little too much about it, though with all truth and purity.

This is quite enough now to answer henceforth all those suggestions, or at least to give you courage to laugh at their author, and to spit in his face. I will tell you the rest one day, either in this world or in the other.

In the third place you ask me for remedies in the trouble caused you by the wicked one's temptations against faith and the Church ; for so I understand you. I will say what God gives me to say.

In this temptation you must behave as in temptations of the flesh, disputing neither little nor much. Do as did the Children of Israel with the bones of the Paschal Lamb, which they did not even try to break, but simply threw into the fire. You must not reply at all, nor appear to hear what the enemy says. Let him clamour as he likes at the door ; you must not say as much as, *Who goes there ?*

True, you will tell me, but he worries me, and his noise makes those within unable to hear one another

speak. It is all the same; patience,—we must prostrate ourselves before God, and remain there at his feet: he will understand, by this humble behaviour, that you are his, and that you want his help, though you cannot even speak. But above all keep yourself well shut in, and open not the door at all, either to see who it is or to drive the nuisance away; at last he will get tired of crying out, and will leave you in peace.

And never too soon, you will say. I pray you get a book called *On Tribulation*, composed by Father Ribadaneira, in Spanish, and translated into French. The Father Rector will tell you where it is printed; read it carefully. Courage, then, it will come to an end at last; provided he enter not, it matters not. And meanwhile it is an excellent sign when the enemy beats and blusters at the door; for it is a sign that he has not got what he wants. If he had it, he would not cry out any more, he would enter and stay. Take note of this, so as not to fall into scruple.

After this remedy, I give you another. Temptations against faith go straight to the understanding, to make it parley, and think, and dream about them. Do you know what you must do while the enemy is occupied trying to escalate the intelligence? Sally out by the gate of the will, and make a good attack on him. That is, when a temptation against faith comes to engage you:—how can this be? but *if* this, but *if* that?—instead of disputing with the enemy by argument, let your affective part rush forth vehe-

mently upon him, and even joining the exterior voice to the interior, cry: Ah! traitor, ah! wretch, thou hast left the church of the angels, and wishest me to leave the church of the saints! Disloyal, faithless, perfidious one, thou didst present to the first woman the apple of perdition, and thou wantest me to eat of it! *Get thee behind me, Satan! It is written: thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.\** No, I will not reason or dispute. Eve wishing to dispute with the devil was seduced and ruined. *Vive Jésus*, in whom I believe! *Vive* the Church, to which I cling! and similar words of fire.

You must also say words to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit (such as he will suggest to you), and even to the Church: O mother of the children of God, never will I separate myself from you, I will to live and die in your bosom.

I know not if I make myself understood. I mean to say that we must fight back with affections and not with reasons; with passions of the heart and not with considerations of the mind. It is true that in these times of temptations the poor will is quite dry; but so much the better: its acts will be so much the more terrible to the enemy, who, seeing that instead of retarding your progress he gives you an opportunity of exercising a thousand virtuous affections, and particularly the protestation of faith, will leave you at last.

In the third place, it will be sometimes good to

\* Matt. iv.

apply fifty or sixty strokes of the discipline, or thirty, as you may be disposed. It is remarkable how good this recipe was found in a soul whom I know. It is, doubtless, because the exterior pain diverts the interior mischief and affliction, and provokes the mercy of God. Add that the wicked one, seeing that his partisan and confederate the flesh is getting beaten, fears and flees. But this third remedy must be used with moderation, and according to the profit you find from it after the experience of some days.

In fine, these temptations are only afflictions, like others; and we must stay ourselves on the saying of Holy Scripture: *Blessed is he that suffers temptation; for when he has been tried he shall receive the crown of glory.\** Know that I have seen few persons make progress without this trial, and we must have patience. Our God, after the storms will send the calm. But above all use the first and second remedy.

For the fourth point, I am not willing to change the offerings you made the first time you vowed yourself, nor the condition which was appointed you, nor any other thing.

As to your daily prayers, this is my counsel. In the morning make the meditation with the preparation as I have marked it in the writing which I send for this purpose. Add the *Paternoster, Ave Maria, Credo, Veni Creator, Ave Maris Stella, Angele Dei*, and a short prayer to the two Saints John, and the two Saints Francis of Assisi and of Paula, which you will find in

\* James i. 12.



the Breviary, or perhaps you already have them in the little book you mean to send me. Salute all the Saints with this vocal prayer :

*Holy Mary, and all Saints, deign to intercede for us with our Lord, that we may obtain to be helped and saved by him who liveth and reigneth, world without end. Amen.\**

Having saluted the Saints who are in heaven, say a *Paternoster* and *Ave* for the faithful departed, and another for the faithful living. Thus you will have visited all the church, one part of which is in heaven, another on earth, another under the earth, as St. Paul and St. John witness. This will take you a full hour.

Hear Mass every day, if possible, in the manner which I have described in writing on meditation.

And either at Mass or in the course of the day I wish the Rosary to be said with the greatest devotion possible.

Throughout the day, plenty of ejaculatory prayers, and specially those of the hours when they strike; this is a useful devotion.

In the evening before supper, I approve of a short recollection, with five *Paternosters* and *Ave Marias*, to the five wounds of our Lord. The recollection may be made by the entrance of the soul into one of the five wounds of our Lord for five days, into the thorns of the crown for the sixth, and into his pierced side for the seventh : for there we must begin the week,

\* Prayer at *Prime*.

and there end it; that is, on Sundays we must return to this heart.

In the evening, about an hour or an hour and a half before supper, retire, and say the *Paternoster*, the *Ave*, the *Credo*: this done, the *Confiteor* up to *meâ culpâ*: then the examination of conscience; after which finish the *meâ culpâ*, and say the Litany of our Lady of Loretto, or, in order, the seven Litanies of our Lord, our Lady, the Angels, and the others as they are in a book made for this purpose. This book is not easy to find; and therefore, if you cannot get them, the Litany of our Lady will do. This will take you nearly half an hour.

Every day take a good half-hour's spiritual reading, this is quite enough for each day. On Feasts you can assist at Vespers, and say the office of our Lady. But if you have a great taste for the prayers you have been used to say, do not change, I beg. And if you happen to omit something that I order, do not make a scruple of it; for here is the general rule of our obedience written in great letters:

WE MUST DO ALL BY LOVE, AND NOTHING BY FORCE.

WE MUST LOVE OBEDIENCE RATHER THAN

FEAR DISOBEDIENCE.

I leave you the spirit of liberty; not that which excludes obedience, for this is the liberty of the flesh; but that which excludes constraint, and scruple, and worry (*empressement*).

If you very much love obedience and submission, I

wish that if a just or charitable necessity require you to omit your exercises you should make this a species of obedience, and supply the defect by love.

I wish you to have a French translation of all the prayers you say. I do not want you to say them in French, but in Latin, for they will give you more devotion; but I want you to have the meaning at hand, even in the Litanies of Jesus, of our Lady, and the others. But do all this without anxiety, and in a spirit of sweetness and love.

Your meditations will be on the life and death of our Lord. . . . I approve your using the Exercises of Thauler, Meditations of St. Bonaventure, and those of Capiglia; for being on the Gospels they are on the life of our Lord. But you must reduce all to the method I send you in this paper. The meditations of the four ends of man will be useful to you, on condition that you always finish with an act of confidence in God, never representing to yourself death or hell on the one side without the cross on the other; so that, after exciting yourself to fear by the one you may return to the other by confidence. The hour of meditation must be only three-quarters at most.

I love spiritual canticles, sung with affection.

As to the ass (body) I approve the fast of Friday, and the frugal supper of the Saturday. I approve your keeping it down the whole of the week, not so much by abstinence from meats (sobriety being observed) as by abstinence from choice in them. I

approve your flattering it sometimes, giving it some oats to eat, as St. Francis did, to make it go quicker. I mean the discipline; which has a wonderful force, by stinging the flesh to quicken the spirit; but only use it twice a week.

You must not lessen the frequency of your communions, unless your confessor orders it. I have this particular consolation, on Feast-days, namely, to know that we are going to communion together.

For the fifth point, it is the truth that I cherish, with a very special love, our Celse-Bénigne, and all the rest of your children. Since God has given your heart this desire to give them entirely to the service of God, you must bring them up in this design, sweetly inspiring suitable thoughts. Have the Confessions of St. Augustine, and read them carefully from the end of the eighth book; you will there see St. Monica, a widow, with the care of her Augustine, and many things which will console you.

As to Celse-Bénigne, you must suggest generous motives, and plant in his little soul the noblest and most gallant aspirations after the service of God, and impress on him a very low idea of mere worldly glory; but this little by little. In proportion as he grows up, we will think of the particular things required, God helping.

Meanwhile, take care, not only about him, but about his sisters, that they sleep alone as far as possible, or with persons in whom you have as full confidence as in yourself. I cannot tell you how

important this advice is ; experience recommends it to me every day.

If Frances wishes, of her own accord, to be a religious, it is well : otherwise I do not approve that her will should be anticipated by resolutions, but only, like the others, by sweet attractions (*inspirations*).

We must, as much as we can, act on souls as the angels do, by gracious and gentle movements. But I quite approve that you have her brought up in the order of Puy-d'Orbe, in which I hope devotion is soon going to begin to flourish again in good earnest. And I want you to co-operate in this intention. But from all the girls keep away vanity of soul : it is almost born with the sex.

I know you have the Epistles of St. Jerome in French : look at what he says of Pacatula and the others, about the education of girls : they will do you good. Still you must use moderation. I have said all when I have said "sweet attractions."

I see that you owe 2,000 crowns ; hasten the payment all you can, and be sure to avoid retaining anything of any one's, as far as possible.

Give some little alms, but with great humility. I like the visitation of the sick, of the old, and women chiefly, and of the young when quite young. I like the visitation of the poor ; particularly of women, with great humility and mildness.

For the sixth point, I approve your dividing your abode between your father and your father-in-law, and that you occupy yourself in procuring the good of

their souls, after the fashion of the angels, as I have said. If the stay at Dijon is a little longer, no matter: it is also your primary duty. Try to make yourself every day more agreeable to both your fathers, and further their salvation in a spirit of sweetness. No doubt the winter will suit you better at Dijon.

I am writing to your father, and as he had commanded me to write him something for the good of his soul, I have done it with much simplicity, perhaps too much.

My advice lies in two points: one, that he should make a general review of all his life for a general confession; a thing without which no man of honour should die; the other that he should try little by little to despoil himself of worldly affections—and I tell him the way to do it.

I propose this to him, in my opinion clearly and gently enough; and with this conclusion, that we must not exactly break through the ties of alliance which we have with the affairs of the world, but unsew and undo them. He will shew you the letter, I doubt not. Help him to understand and practise it.

You owe him a great charity in leading him to a happy end, and no consideration should hinder you from employing yourself in this with a holy ardour; for he is the first neighbour whom God obliges you to love; and the first part you should love in him is his soul, and in his soul the conscience, and in his conscience, purity, and in purity the seizing hold of eternal life. I say the same to your father-in-law.

Perhaps your honoured father, not knowing me, will find my freedom improper; but make me known to him, and I am sure he will love me for this freedom more than for anything else.

I am writing to Monseigneur de Bourges a letter of five sheets, in which I point out to him the method of preaching, and with this I tell him my opinion about several points of the life of an archbishop. Well, as for him, I have no doubt he will find it agreeable. In fine, what would you further? Father, brother, uncle, children, all are infinitely dear to me.

As for the seventh point, about the spirit of liberty, I will tell you what it is.

Every good man is free from acts of mortal sin, and does not keep any affection to it. This is a liberty necessary for salvation. I do not speak of this; the liberty of which I speak is the liberty of well-beloved children. And what is it? *It is a detachment of the Christian heart from all things to follow the known will of God.* You will easily understand what I mean to say, if God gives me the grace to propose to you the marks, signs, effects, occasions of this liberty.

We ask from God before all things, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All this is no other thing than the spirit of liberty; for provided that the name of God is sanctified, that his majesty reigns in you, that his will is done, the soul cares for nothing else. First *mark*: the soul which has this liberty is not attached to consolations,

but receives afflictions with all the sweetness that the flesh can permit. I do not say that it does not love and desire consolations, but I say that it does not attach its heart to them. Second *mark*: it does not at all attach its affection to spiritual exercises; so that, if by sickness or other accident kept from them, it feels no grief thereat. Here also I do not say it does not love them, but I say it is not attached to them.

Such a heart scarcely loses its joyfulness, because no privation makes him sad whose heart is quite unattached. I do not say he does not lose it, but that he scarcely loses it, that is, only for a short time.

The *effects* of this liberty are a great suavity of soul, a great gentleness and condescension in all that is not sin or danger of sin; a temper sweetly pliable to the acts of every virtue and charity.

For example: interrupt a soul which is attached to the exercise of meditation; you will see it leave with annoyance, worried and surprised. A soul which has true liberty will leave its exercise with an equal countenance, and a heart gracious towards the importunate person who has inconvenienced her. For it is all one to her whether she serve God by meditating, or serve him by bearing with her neighbour: both are the will of God, but the bearing with her neighbour is necessary at that time.

The *occasions* of this liberty are all the things which happen against our inclination; for whoever is not attached to his inclinations, is not impatient when they are contradicted.



This liberty has two opposite vices, instability and constraint, or dissolution and slavery. Instability, or dissolution of spirit, is a certain excess of liberty, by which we change our exercises, our state of life, without proof or knowledge that such change is God's will. On the smallest occasion practices, plan, rule are changed; for every little occurrence we leave our rule and laudable custom: and, thus the heart is dissipated and ruined, and is like an orchard open on all sides, whose fruits are not for its owners, but for all passers by.

Constraint or slavery is a certain want of liberty by which the soul is overwhelmed with either disgust or anger, when it cannot do what it has planned, though still able to do better.

For example: I design to make my meditation every day in the morning. If I have the spirit of instability, or dissolution, on the least occasion in the world I shall put it off till the evening—for a dog which kept me from sleeping, for a letter I have to write, of no urgency whatever. On the other hand, if I have the spirit of constraint or servitude, I shall not leave my meditation at that hour, even if a sick person have great need of my help at the time, even if I have a despatch which is of great importance, and which cannot well be put off, and so on.

It remains for me to give you one or two examples of this liberty which will better make you understand what I cannot properly describe. But first I must tell

you that you are to observe two rules, to avoid stumbling in this point.

A person should never omit his exercises and the common rules of virtues unless he sees the will of God on the other side. Now, the will of God shows itself in two ways, by necessity and charity. I want to preach this Lent in a little place of my diocese; if, however, I get ill, or break my leg, I must not be grieved or disquieted because I cannot preach; for it is certainly the will of God that I should serve him by suffering and not by preaching. Or if I am not ill, but an occasion presents itself of going to some other place, where, if I go not, the people will become Huguenots,—there is the will of God sufficiently declared to turn me gently from my design.

The second rule is that when we are to use liberty for the sake of charity, it must be without scandal and without injustice. For example: I may know that I should be more useful somewhere very far from my diocese. I cannot use liberty in this; for I should scandalize and commit injustice, because I am obliged to be here. Hence, this liberty never interferes with vocations; on the contrary, it makes each one satisfied with his own, since each should know that he is placed in it by the will of God.

Now, I want you to look at Cardinal Borromeo, who is going to be canonized in a few days. His was a spirit the most exact, rigid, and austere that it is possible to imagine: he drank nothing but water, and eat nothing but bread; he was so austere that, after he

was archbishop, he only entered twice during twenty-four years into the house of his brothers, when ill, and twice into his garden. Yet, this rigorous soul, when eating with the Swiss, his neighbours, as he often did to keep a good influence over them, made no difficulty in drinking bumpers and healths with them, besides what he drank for his thirst. There is a trait of holy liberty in the most austere man of this age. A dissolute spirit would have done too much; a constrained spirit would have considered it a mortal sin; a spirit of liberty would have done it for charity.

Spiridion, an ancient bishop, having received a pilgrim almost dead with hunger, during Lent, and in a place in which there was nothing but salt-meat, had some of this cooked, and offered it to the pilgrim. The pilgrim was unwilling to take it, in spite of his necessity. Spiridion had no need of it, but ate some first for charity, in order to remove, by his example, the scruple of the pilgrim. Here was a charitable liberty in this holy man.

Father Ignatius of Loyola, who is going to be canonized, ate meat on Wednesday in Holy Week on the simple order of the doctor, who judged it expedient for a little sickness he had. A spirit of constraint would have had to be besought three days.

But I want now to show you a shining *sun* of detachment, a spirit truly free, and unbound by any engagement, and holding only to the will of God. I have often thought what was the greatest mortification of all the Saints I know; and after many con-

siderations I have found this : St. John Baptist went into the desert at the age of five years, and knew that our and his Saviour was born quite near him, that is, one day's journey, or two or three, or so. God knows whether St. John's heart, touched with the love of his Saviour from the womb of his mother, desired to enjoy his holy presence. Yet he stays twenty-five years there in the desert, without going even once to see our Saviour. Then he stays everywhere to catechize, without going to our Lord, and waits for him to go to him : afterwards, having baptized our Lord, he does not follow him, but stays to do his own work. O God ! what a mortification of spirit ! To be so near his Saviour, and not to see him ! to have him so near and not to enjoy him ! And what is this but to have the heart free from all, even from God himself, to do the will of God and to serve him ? To leave God for God, and not to love God, in order so much better and more purely to love him ! This example overwhelms my soul with its grandeur.

I forgot to say that the will of God is known not only by necessity and charity, but by obedience ; so that he who receives a command must believe that it is the will of God. Am I not writing too much ? but my spirits runs quicker than I wish, carried on by the ardent desire of serving you.

For the eighth point, remember the day of the blessed King St. Louis, the day on which you took again the crown of your kingdom from your own soul to lay it at the feet of the King Jesus : the day

on which you renewed your youth, like the eagle, plunging it in the sea of penance; a day, the harbinger of the eternal day of your soul. Remember that after the grand resolutions you expressed of being all God's, body, heart, and soul, I said *Amen*, on behalf of the whole Church our Mother: and at the same time, the Holy Virgin, with all the Saints and blessed made their great *Amen* and *Alleluia* resound in heaven. Remember to hold that all the past is nothing, and that every day you must say with David: *now I have begun*\* to love my God properly. Do much for God, and do nothing without love. Apply all to this love; eat and drink for it.

Be devout to St. Louis, and admire in him his great constancy. He was king at twelve, had nine children, made war continually, against either rebels or the enemies of the faith; was king more than forty years; and at the end of all, his confessor, a holy man, swore that having confessed him all his life, he had never found that he had fallen into mortal sin. He made two voyages beyond the sea: in both he lost his army, and in the latter he died of pestilence, after having for a long time visited, helped, served, dressed and cured the plague-stricken of his army—and dies joyous, constant, with a verse of David in his mouth.† I give you this saint as your special patron for all the year; you will have him before your eyes, with the others named above. In the coming year, if it please

\* Ps. lxxvi. 11.

† I will enter into your house, O Lord, &c.—Ps. v. 8.

God, I will give you another, after you have profited well in the school of this one.

For the ninth point, believe two things about me : —the one that God wants you to make use of me, so do not hesitate ; the other, that in what is for your salvation, God will help me with light necessary to serve you ; as to the will, he has already given it me so strong, that it cannot be stronger. I have received the note of your vows, which I guard and regard (*garde et regarde*) carefully, as a fit instrument of our alliance, entirely founded on God, and which will last for eternity, by the mercy of him who is the author of it.

Monseigneur, the Bishop of Saluzzo, one of my most intimate friends, and one of the greatest servants of God and the Church, died a little while ago, to the incredible sorrow of his people, who had only enjoyed his labours one year and a half ; for we were made bishops together and on the very same day. I ask you for three chaplets for his repose, certain that if he had outlived me he would have procured me a like charity from all those with whom he had credit.

You seem, from one passage of your letter, to consider it settled that we shall see one another again some day. May God will it, my dearest sister ! but for my part, I see nothing before my eyes which can make me hope to have the liberty to go thither ! I told you the reason in confidence, at Saint-Claude.

I am tied here, hand and foot, and as for you, my good sister, does not the inconvenience of the past journey frighten you? But we will see, between this and Easter, what God wishes from us: his holy will be ever ours.

I pray you to bless God with me for the effects of the voyage of Saint-Claude: I cannot tell them you, but they are great; and at your first leisure write me the history of your gate of Saint-Claude,\* and believe that it is not from curiosity that I ask it.

My mother is as entirely yours as she can be. I have been consoled to see that you willingly call Madame du Puy-d'Orbe sister; she is a great soul if well assisted, and God will make use of her to the glory of his name; help her and visit her by letter. God will be pleased with you for it.

If I decide for myself, I shall never finish this letter, which is written without other design than to answer yours. Still I must finish it, begging the great assistance of your prayers, and declaring my great need of them. I never pray without making you part of the subject of my prayers. I never salute the angels without saluting yours; do the same for me, and get Celse-Bénigne to do it. I always pray for him and for all your household! Be sure I never forget them, nor their deceased father, in Holy Mass. God be in your heart, your mind, your soul, my dearest sister; and I am in his merciful love, your very

\* Referring to a certain vision of Madame de Chantal's.

devoted servant, with liberty because it is *par homme*.\*  
Pray sometimes for the return of my unfortunate  
Geneva.

\* I think this means that his sort of feudal service to Madame de Chantal is not direct, but by deputy, as kings acknowledged their vassalship.



## BOOK IV.

### LETTERS TO MEN OF THE WORLD.

#### LETTER I.

##### TO A FRIEND.

*Way to live in peace.*

IF you wish nothing to cross your life, desire not reputation or the glory of the world.

Attach yourself not to human consolations and friendships.

Love not your life, and despise all that may be painful to your natural inclinations.

Support generously the pains of the body and the most violent maladies, with acquiescence in the will of God.

Trouble not yourself about human judgments.

Keep silence about all things, and you shall have interior peace; because, for me and for you there is no other secret to acquire this peace save to suffer, *à la rigueur*, the judgments of men.

Disturb not yourself about what the world will say of you; await the judgment of God, and your patience

will then judge those who will have judged you. Those who run at the ring do not think of the company which is looking at them, but of running well in order to carry it off. Think for whom you labour, and those who wish to give you pain will hardly do so. Your humble, &c.

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## LETTER II.

TO A GENTLEMAN WHO WAS GOING TO LIVE AT COURT.

*8th December, 1610.*

SIR,—At last then you are going to make sail, and take the open sea of the world at court. God be gracious to you, and may his holy hand be ever with you!

I am not so fearful as many others, and I do not think that profession one of the most dangerous for those of noble souls and manly heart; for there are but two principal rocks in this gulf: vanity, which ruins spirits that are soft, slothful, feminine, and weak (*flouets*); and ambition, which ruins audacious and presumptuous hearts.

And as vanity is a defect of courage, and has not the strength to undertake the acquisition of true and solid praise, but desires and is content with the false and the empty; so ambition is an excess of courage, which leads us to purchase glories and honours without and against the rule of reason.

Thus vanity causes us to occupy ourselves with those silly gallantries which are in praise with women and other little spirits, and in contempt with great hearts and elevated souls; and ambition makes us want to have honours before deserving them. It is ambition which makes us put to our own credit, and at too high price, the merit of our predecessors, and we would willingly gain our esteem from theirs.

Well, sir, against all this, since it pleases you that I speak so, continue to nourish your soul with spiritual and Divine meats, for they will make us strong against vanity, and just against ambition.

Keep carefully to frequent communion; and, believe me, you could do nothing more calculated to strengthen yourself in virtue. And to make yourself quite safe in this practice, put yourself under the orders of some good confessor, and beseech him to take authority to make you give an account in confession of the failures you may make in this exercise, if by chance you make any. Always confess humbly, and with a true and express purpose of amendment.

Never forget (and this I conjure you) to ask on your knees the help of our Lord, before leaving your house, and to ask the pardon of your sins before going to bed.

Especially beware of bad books; and for nothing in the world let your soul be carried away by certain writings which weak brains admire, because of some vain subtleties which they find therein. Such are the

works of that infamous Rabelais, and certain others of our age, who profess to doubt everything, to despise everything, and to scoff at all the maxims of antiquity. On the contrary, have books of solid doctrine, and specially Christian and spiritual ones to recreate yourself in from time to time.

I recommend to you the gentle and sincere courtesy which offends no one and obliges all ; which seeks love rather than honour ; which never rallies any one so as to hurt them, nor stingingly ; which repels no one and is itself never repelled. Or, if repelled, it is but rarely ; in exchange for which it is very often honourably advanced.

Take care, I beseech you, not to embarrass yourself in love-makings (*amourettes*), and not to allow your affections to prevent your judgment and reason, in the choice of objects of love ; for, when once inclination has taken its course, it drags the judgment like a slave to decisions which are very improper, well worthy of the repentance which soon follows them.

I would wish that, first, in speech, in bearing, and in intercourse with others, you should make open and express profession of wishing to live virtuously, judiciously, perseveringly, and Christianly.

I say virtuously, that no one may attempt to engage you in immoralities.

Judiciously, that you may not show extreme signs, exteriorly, of your intention, but such only as, according to your condition, may not be censured by the wise.

Perseveringly, because unless you show with perseverance an equal and inviolable will, you will expose your resolutions to the designs and attempts of many miserable souls, who attack others to draw them to their company.

In fine, I say Christianly, because some make profession of wishing to be virtuous philosophically (*à la philosophique*), who, however, are not so, and can in no way be so; and are nothing else but phantoms of virtue, hiding from those who are not familiar with them their bad life and ways by graceful manners and words.

But we, who well know that we cannot have a single particle of virtue but by the grace of our Lord, we must employ piety and holy devotion to live virtuously; otherwise we shall have virtues only in imagination and in shadow.

Now it is of the last importance to let ourselves be known early such as we wish to be always, and in this we must have no haggling (*marchander*).

It is also of the greatest importance to make some friends of the like aim, with whom you can associate and strengthen yourself. For it is a very true thing that the company of well-regulated souls is extremely useful to us to keep our own well regulated.

I think you will easily find either among the Jesuits, or the Capuchins, or the Feuillants, or even outside the monasteries, some gracious (*courtois*) spirit who will be glad if you sometimes go to see him, to recreate yourself, and take spiritual breath.

But you must permit me to say to you one thing in particular.

You see, sir, I fear you may return to gaming, and I fear it, because it will be to you a great evil : it would, in a few days, dissipate your heart, and make all the flowers of your good desires wither. It is the occupation of an idler ; and those who want to get renown and introductions by playing with the great, and who call this the best way of getting known, show that they have no good deserts, since they have no better credit than that of having money and wanting to risk it. It is no great merit to be known as gamesters ; but if they meet with great losses every one knows them to be fools. I pass over the consequences, such as quarrels, despair and madneses, from which not one gamester has any exemption.

I wish you, further, a vigorous heart, not to flatter your body by delicacies, in eating, sleeping, and such other softnesses : for a generous heart has always a little contempt for bodily comforts and pleasures.

Still our Lord said that *those who are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings*,\* therefore do I speak to you about it. Our Lord does not mean to say that all those who are in king's houses must be clothed in soft garments, but he says only that customarily those who clothe themselves softly are there. Of course I am not speaking of the exterior of the clothing, but of the interior ; for as to the ex-

\* Matt. xi. 8.

terior, you know far better what is proper; it is not for me to speak of it.

I mean, then, to say that I would like you sometimes to correct your body so far as to make it feel some rigours and hardships; by the contempt of delicacies, and by frequent denial of things agreeable to the senses; for, again, the reason must sometimes exercise its superiority, and the authority which it has to control the sensual appetites.

My God! I am too diffuse, and I scarcely know what I am saying, for it is without leisure; and at odd moments; you know my heart, and will take all well; but still I must further say this.

Imagine that you were a courtier of St. Louis; this holy king (and the king\* is now holy by innocence) loved that every one should be brave, courageous, generous, good-humoured, courteous, affable, free, polite; and still he loved, above all, that every one should be a good Christian.

And if you had been with him, you would have seen him kindly laughing on occasion, speaking boldly at proper time, taking care that all was in splendour about him, like another Solomon, to maintain the royal dignity; and a moment afterwards serving the poor in the hospitals, and, in a word, marrying civil with Christian virtue, and majesty with humility.

In a word, this is what we must try after; to be no less brave for being Christian, and no less Christian for being brave; and for this we must be *very*

\* Louis XIII., aged nine years.

good Christians, that is, very devout, pious, and if possible, spiritual; for, as St. Paul says: *the spiritual man discerneth all things*;\* he knows at what time, in what order, by what method, each virtue must be practised.

Form often this good thought, that we are walking in this world between Paradise and Hell, that our last step will place us in an eternal dwelling, and that to make the last well, we must try to make all the others well.

O holy and unending eternity! blessed is he who thinks of you. Yes; for what do we play here in this world but a children's game? Nothing whatever, *if it were not the passage to eternity*.

On this account, therefore, we must pay attention to the time we have to dwell here below, and to all our occupations, so as to employ them in the conquest of the permanent good.

Love me always as yours (*chose votre*), for I am so in our Lord, wishing you every happiness for this world, and particularly for the other: may God bless you, and hold you by his holy hand.

And to finish where I began: you are going to take the high sea of the world; change not, on that account, patron or sails, or anchor, or wind. Have Jesus always for your patron, his cross for a mast, on which you must spread your resolutions as a sail: your anchor shall be a profound confidence in him,—and sail prosperously; may the favourable wind of celestial

\* 1 Cor. ii. 15.



inspirations ever fill your vessel's sails fuller and fuller, and make you happily arrive at the port of a holy eternity, which with true heart is wished you, sir, by your, &c.

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LETTER III.

TO A MAN OF THE WORLD.

*To speak too much is the worst kind of ill-speaking.*

SIR,—You have greatly obliged me by taking my frankness in good part, though truly you could not well refuse it this gracious welcome, since it went to you with the safe-conduct of your invitation, and under the favour of a true friendship; otherwise I would have taken good care not to send it. I will by no means return upon the declaration it pleases you to make to me of your intention in the edition of the little book,\* for I should be sorry if I had ever had a single little suspicion to the contrary: but I will only say this word which springs from the disposition of my soul.

If any one had spoken or written extravagantly of authority, he would be very wrong; for there is no way of bad speaking worse than too much speaking. If we say less than we should it is easy to add: but after having said too much it is hard to take off, and

\* St. Francis had disapproved a book of which his correspondent was the author, or which had at least been published by his means.

we can never make the withdrawal soon enough to hinder the harm of the excess.

Now, *this* is the height of virtue, to correct immoderation moderately. It is almost impossible to arrive at this point of perfection. I say *almost*, because of him who said, *I was peaceful with those who hated peace.\** Otherwise, I think I should not have said it. Huntsmen push into the brambles, and often return more injured than the animal they intended to injure. The greater part of these ill-advised statements which are made or written are better met by disdain than by opposition; but let us speak of them no more. To Cæsar what is Cæsar's, but to God also what is God's.

I write to you without leisure, you will bear with me, please, according to your kindness, having regard to my affection which is entirely inclined to honour and cherish you very specially. And now, I pray our Lord to fill you with the grace, peace, and sweetness of his holy spirit, and to give his sacred benediction to all your family; leaving beyond this, the bearer to tell you how well our daughter is, I am your, &c.

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#### LETTER IV.

TO AN AUTHOR.

*A magistrate who had sent him a book of Christian poetry.*

SIR,—It has been to me an extremely grateful honour to have received from you these rich and devout

\* Ps. cxix. 6.

studies which the Rev. Father Angelus le Blanc has handed me; and if I had the rich scented casket or cabinet steeped in unguents, which that prince of old, Alexander the Great, destined for the keeping of the works of Homer, I would destine it also for the treasuring of this beautiful present. It is by so much the more precious to me, as I had the less reason to dare to hope for it, since I did not even think you knew I was in the world; in which being truly so small a thing, held in this nook of our mountains, I think myself invisible. But still, as the strong lights discover the atoms, so have you been able to see me.

But since it has pleased you, sir, to turn not only your thought, but what is still more, your good will, towards me, I beseech you very humbly to continue this grace in my regard, by the same courtesy and goodness which has made it spring in your soul, without any merit on my part. And if I cannot by effects, at least I will try by affection, to correspond with this favour, ever bearing you an honour, or even, if you allow this word, a love, very special. I am further drawn to this by this learned piety which makes you so happily transform the Pagan into Christian muses, taking them from that old profane Parnassus, and putting them on the new sacred Calvary.

And would to God that so many Christian poets who have in our age worthily shown, like you, sir, the beauty of their minds, had also, like you, shown the goodness of their judgment in the choice of the subjects of their poems! The corruption of manners

would not be so great ; for it is a marvel how words marshalled by the laws of verse, have power to penetrate hearts and subdue the memory. May God pardon them the abuse they have made of their learning. And do you, sir, ever employ and enjoy thus holily the beautiful, rich, and excellent mind which the Divine Majesty has bestowed on you in this temporal life, in order that you may rejoice for ever, contemplating and gloriously singing the same mysteries in eternal life.

I am with all my heart your, &c.

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## LETTER V.

TO A LORD OF THE COURT.\*

*The Saint rejoices that he preserves piety in the midst of the Court.*

*Anncy, 12th September, 1614.*

I HAVE no greater glory in this world, Monsieur my son, than to be named father of such a son, and no sweeter consolation than to see the pleasure you take in it ; but I will not say any more on this subject, which indeed is beyond my speech.

It is enough that God does me this grace, which is every day more delicious to me, as I am being told on every hand that you live in God, although amid this world.

\* Probably the Baron de Lux.

O Jesus, my God! what happiness to have a son who knows how to sing so beautifully the songs of Sion in the land of Babylon! The Israelites excused themselves formerly from this, because not only were they among the Babylonians, but also captives and slaves of the Babylonians; but he who is not in the slavery of the court, he can even in the court adore the Lord and serve him holily.

No indeed, my dearest son, though you may change place, occupations and society, you will never, I trust, change your heart, nor your heart its love, nor your love its object; since you could not choose either a worthier love for your heart, or a worthier object for your love than him who will make it eternally happy. Thus the variety of the faces of court and world will make no change in yours. Your eyes will ever regard heaven, to which you aspire, and your mouth will ever demand the sovereign good which you hope to have there.

But think, I beg you, my dear son, what an incomparable joy it would have been to me to get near you on the opportunity of this meeting of the Estates (of Burgundy), to be able to speak to you with that new confidence which these names of father and of son would have given me. Still God not wishing it, since he allows me to be tied here, neither you nor I ought to wish it. You will then be my Josue there and will fight for the cause of God *actually*; and as for me I will be here like another Moses, and will hold up my hands to heaven, imploring for you the

Divine mercy, that you may overcome the difficulties your good intention will meet.

Ask you henceforth to love me, I will not, since I can say it to you more briefly and expressively; be then my true son, with all your heart, sir, as I am with all mine, not only your very humble and obedient servant, but your father, illimitably affectionate, &c.

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LETTER VI.

TO A MAN OF THE WORLD.

*We cannot have the true intelligence of the Holy Scriptures  
outside the Church.*

2nd July, 1619.

SIR,—It is very true that the Sacred Scripture contains with much clearness the doctrine required for your salvation, and I never thought the contrary.

It is also true that it is a very good method of interpreting the Sacred Scripture to compare passages with one another, and to reduce the whole to the analogy of the faith; that also I have ever said. But all the same I cease not to believe quite certainly, and to say constantly, that in spite of this admirable and delightful clearness of the Scripture on things necessary for salvation, the human spirit does not always find the true sense of it; but can err, and in fact very often does err, in the intelligence of passages which are the most clear and the most necessary for the establishment of the faith.

Witness the Lutheran errors, and the Calvinist books, which, under the conduct of the fathers of the pretended Reform, remain in irreconcilable contradiction on the meaning of the words of institution of the Blessed Eucharist. While both sides boast of having carefully and faithfully examined the sense of these works by comparing other passages of Holy Scripture, and adjusting the whole to the analogy of faith, they still remain opposed in their way of understanding words of such great importance. Scripture, then, is plain in its words, but the heart of man is dim-sighted, and, like a night-owl, cannot see this brightness.

The above-mentioned method is very good, but the human spirit knows not how to use it. It is the Spirit of *God*, sir, which gives the true sense of it to us, and gives it only to his Church, the column and support of the truth; the Church, by whose ministry this Divine Spirit keeps and maintains his truth, that is, the true sense of his word; the Church, which alone has the infallible assistance of the Spirit of Truth to find the truth clearly, surely, and infallibly in the Word of God. So that he who seeks the truth of this celestial word outside that Church which is the guardian of it, never finds it. And he who wants to know it otherwise than through the Church's ministry, instead of truth, will only embrace vanity, and instead of the certain clearness of the sacred word will follow the illusions of that false angel, who transforms himself into an angel of light.

Thus acted formerly all heretics, who have all

professed to have the better understanding of the Scripture, and to wish to reform the Church; vainly seeking truth outside the bosom of the spouse. Whereas the heavenly Spouse confided it to her as to a faithful depositary and guardian, who would distribute it to the dear children of the nuptial bed, which is, and will be for ever, without stain.

This, then, is the substance of what I have to say, sir, and it is neither by little nor by much contrary to the doctrine of the holy Fathers, which M. de Mornay gives in the book which you pleased to send me yesterday evening. This I send back to-day, with thanks, and declaring that I shall continually desire to be able, by some happy opportunity, to testify, sir, that I am yours, &c.

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## LETTER VII.

TO A GENTLEMAN WHO WISHED TO LEAVE THE WORLD.

SIR,—Go and bless our Lord for the favourable inspiration he has given you to withdraw yourself from this great and wide road which those of your age and profession are accustomed to follow, and by which they ordinarily arrive at a thousand kinds of vices and inconveniences, and very often at eternal damnation. Meanwhile, to make this Divine vocation fruitful, to realize more clearly the state which you are about to choose, and to better satisfy this infinite mercy, which



invites you to his perfect love, I counsel you to practise these exercises for the three months following.

Firstly, to cut off some satisfactions of the senses, which you might take without offending God; and for this purpose always to rise at six, whether you have slept well or badly, provided you are not ill (for in that case you would have to condescend to the sickness); and to do something more on Fridays, rise at five. This arrangement will give you more leisure to make your prayer and reading.

Also, to accustom yourself to say every day, after or before prayer, fifteen Our Fathers, and fifteen Hail Marys, with your arms extended in the form of a cross.

Moreover, to renounce the pleasures of the taste, eating those meats at table which may be less agreeable to you, provided they are not unwholesome, and leaving those to which your taste may have more inclination.

Further, I would wish you sometimes in the week to sleep clothed.

For these little light austerities will serve you to a double end; the one, to impetrate more surely the light required for your spirit to make its choice (for the lowering of the body in those who have entire strength and health marvellously raises the spirit); the other, to try and to *feel* austerity, in order to see if you could embrace it, and what repugnance you will have to it. This experiment is necessary to test the slight inclination you have to leave the world; and

if you are faithful in the practice of the little which I propose to you, you will be able to judge what you would be in the much, which is practised in religious orders.

Pray earnestly to our Lord to illuminate you, and say often to him the word of St. Paul: *Lord, what would you have me to do?*\* and that of David: *Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.*† Above all, if you awake during the night, employ well this time in speaking to our Lord on your choice; protest often to his majesty that you resign to him, and leave in his hands the disposition of all the moments of your life, and that he must please dispose of them at his will.

Fail not to make your prayer morning and evening, when you can; with a little retreat before supper, to lift up your heart unto our Lord.

Take pastimes which are of the more vigorous kind, such as riding, leaping, and the like; and not the soft ones, such as cards and dancing. But if you are touched with some vainglory about those others,—alas! you must say, what does all this profit one for eternity?

Go to communion every Sunday, and always with prayers to beg the light you need: and on feast-days you may well visit, as an exercise, holy places—the Capuchins, St. Bernard's, the Carthusians. May God grant you his peace, his grace, his light, and his most holy consolation.

If you feel the inspiration towards religion gather

\* Acts ix. 6.

† Ps. cxlii. 11.

strength, and your heart urged by it, take counsel with your confessor; and in case you make a resolution, gradually dispose your grandfather towards it, that the annoyance and pain of your leaving may fall as little as possible on religion, and that you only may be burdened with it. *Oh! how good is God to his Israel! How good to the right of heart.\**

CONSIDERATIONS PROPER FOR A PERSON WHO HAS AN  
INSPIRATION TO QUIT THE WORLD.

I. Consider, first, that our Lord, being able to oblige his creatures to all sorts of services and obediences towards him, has not, however, willed to do so, but is satisfied with obliging us to the keeping of his commandments. So that, if he had pleased to ordain that we should fast all our life, that we should all live the life of hermits Carthusians, Capuchins, still it would be nothing to the great duty we owe him; and yet he is content that we simply keep his commandments.

II. Consider, secondly, that though he has not obliged us to any greater service than we pay him in keeping his commandments, still he has invited and counselled us to live a very perfect life, and to observe an entire renouncement of the vanities and concupiscences of the world.

III. Consider, thirdly, that whether we embrace the counsels of our Lord, giving ourselves to a stricter life, or whether we live in the common life, and in the

\* Ps. lxxii. 1.

mere observance of the commandments, in each we shall have some difficulty. If we leave the world we shall have labour to keep our appetites continually guarded and subject, to renounce ourselves, give up our own will, and live in a very absolute subjection, under the laws of obedience, chastity, and poverty. If we stay in the common path, we shall have a perpetual labour in fighting the world which will surround us, in resisting the frequent occasions of sin which beset us, and in keeping our bark safe amid the tempests.

IV. Consider, fourthly, that in both one life and the other, serving our Lord well, we shall have a thousand consolations. Out of the world, the mere satisfaction of having left all for God is worth more than a thousand worlds; the satisfaction of being conducted by obedience, of being preserved by laws, and of being, as it were, under protection from the chief snares of life, are sweet satisfactions. I leave out the peace and tranquillity found there, the pleasure of being occupied night and day in prayers and Divine things, and a thousand such deliciousnesses (*délices*). And as to the common life, the liberty, the variety of the service he can pay our Lord, the ease of having only to observe the commandments of God, and a hundred other such considerations, make it very delectable.

On all this you will say to God:—Ah! Lord, in what state shall I serve you? Ah! my soul, wherever thy God calls thee, thou shalt be faithful to him.

But on which side do you think you will do best? Examine your spirit, to know if it does not feel more inclination to one side than the other; and having ascertained this, still do not as yet resolve, but wait till you are told.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

I. Imagine you see St. Joseph and our Lady, just before our Lord's birth, arrive in Bethlehem, and seek a lodging everywhere, without finding any one willing to receive them. O God! what contempt and rejection of heavenly and holy persons does the world show, and how willingly do these two holy souls embrace this abjection! They do not set themselves up, they make no remonstrances about their quality, but quite simply receive these refusals and this harshness with an unequalled sweetness. Oh! miserable that I am, the least forgetfulness of the punctilious honour which is my due, or which I think my due, troubles me, disquiets me, excites my arrogance and pride, everywhere I force myself into the front rank. Alas! when shall I have that virtue,—the contempt of myself and of vanities!

II. Consider how St. Joseph and our Lady enter the hollow and shed which sometimes served for a stable to strangers, to effect the glorious bringing-forth of the Saviour. Where are the proud edifices which the ambition of the world raises for the habitation of vile and detestable sinners? Ah! what contempt of the grandeurs of the world has this Divine Saviour

taught us! How happy are those who know how to love holy simplicity and moderation! A miserable wretch like me must have palaces; and is not satisfied then: and behold my Saviour under a broken roof, and on straw, poorly and pitifully lodged!

III. Consider this Divine baby, born naked, shivering in a manger, in swaddling-clothes. Alas! how poor all is, how vile and abject, in this birth! How soft are we, and slaves to our comforts, and in love with sensualities! We must strongly excite in ourselves the contempt of the world, and the desire of suffering for our Lord abjections, discomforts, poverty and need. If you are sometimes a little difficult to treat in your temporal infirmities, little by little this will pass. The human spirit makes so many turns and doubles, without our thinking of it, that we must make some wry faces: he who makes the least is the best.

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## LETTER VIII.

### TO A DOCTOR.

*That we must resign ourselves to God's will in the death  
of our parents.*

MY DEAR SON,—The true science of God teaches us, above all things, that his will ought to bring our heart to his obedience, and make us find good, as indeed it is most good, all that it ordains for the children of his good pleasure.

You will be, I am sure, of these, and on this principle you will acquiesce, gently and humbly, though not without a feeling of sorrow, in the mercy he has granted to your good mother, whom he has withdrawn into the bosom of his blessed eternity. Thus do the preceding circumstances give us every reason to believe, with as much certainty as we may rightly have in such a matter. Well then, it is done, this is what I had to say to you. Weep now, but moderate your tears and bless God; for this mother will be good to you, as you must hope, much more where she is, than she could have been where she was. Behold her then there with the eyes of your faith, and so calm your soul.

Your good father is well in health and better in spirits. For about a month now he has worn his mourning, of mixed sorrow and consolation, according to the two parts of his soul. Study ever harder and harder in a spirit of diligence and humility; and I am all yours.

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### LETTER IX.

TO MONSIEUR DE ROCHEFORT.

*Consolations on the death of his son.*

20th January, 1614.

SIR,—Knowing what you have felt about your son by what I have felt myself, I realize that your pain has

been extreme; for truly, remembering the contentment which you took in speaking to me the other day about this child, I felt a great compassion, when I reflected how painful would be your sorrow at the news of his decease; but still I did not dare to express to you my sympathy, not knowing whether the loss was certain, nor whether it had been announced to you. And now, sir, I come too late to contribute towards the consolation of your heart, which will already, I am sure, have received much relief, so as no longer to remain in the grief which so sensible an affliction had caused it.

For you will have well known how to consider that this dear child was more God's than yours, who had it only as a loan from that sovereign liberality. And if his Providence judged that it was time to withdraw it to himself, we must believe that it was for the child's good, in which a loving father like you must quietly acquiesce. Our age is not so delightful that those who quit it should be much lamented. This son has, I think, gained much by leaving it almost before properly entering it.

The word "dead" is terrifying, as it is spoken to us: for some one comes to you and says: your dear father is dead, and your son is dead:—but this is not a fit way of speaking among us Christians, for we should say: your son or your father has gone into his and your country; and because it was necessary he has passed through death, not stopping in it. I know not, indeed, how we can in right judgment esteem this world



to be our country, in which we are for so short a time, in comparison with heaven, in which we are to be eternally. We are on our way, and are more assured of the presence of our dear friends there above than of these here below; for those are expecting us, and we go towards them; these let us go, and will delay as long after us as they can, and if they go with us, it is against their will.

But if some remains of sorrow still oppress your mind for the departure of this sweet soul, throw your heart before our Lord crucified, and ask his help; he will give it you, and will inspire into you the thought and the firm resolution to prepare yourself well to make in your turn, at the hour he has fixed, this terrifying passage, in such way that you may happily arrive at the place in which we hope already is lodged our poor—or rather, our happy departed. Sir, if I am heard in my continual desire, you will be filled with all holy prosperity; for it is with all my heart that I cherish and honour yours, and in this occasion, and in every other, I name myself and make myself, sir, your, &c.

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LETTER X.

TO A MAN OF THE WORLD.

*Consolations on the death of his wife.*

*Anncy, 7th August. 1621.*

SIR,—I have just learnt from Doctor Grandis the painful yet happy decease of Madam, your dear spouse.

Truly, my heart has been as much touched by it as any loss I have experienced for a long time ; for the goodness, the piety, and the virtue which I had seen in that beautiful soul had so far obliged me to honour her, that I had made a solemn profession to do so henceforward. How happy she is, this dear lady, to have preserved, amid so many pains and labours, the fidelity she owed to her God ! And what a consolation has it been to me, to have known some of the words of charity which her spirit ejaculated with her last sighs into the bosom of the Divine mercy !

But, sir, ought I not to have an immortal obligation for the favour she did me, when in this extremity of her mortal life she so often testified that she had memory of me, as of him whom she knew to be altogether devoted to her in our Lord ? Never will this remembrance depart from my soul ; and not being able to offer her the very faithful service I had sworn to her virtue and devotion, I beg you, sir, to accept it, and receive it with that which the honour of your goodness had already demanded from my affections. Meantime, on this occasion employ the greatness of your heart in moderating the greatness of the pain which the greatness of your loss has given you. Let us acquiesce, sir, in the decrees of the sovereign Providence, decrees which are always just, always holy, always adorable, although obscure and impenetrable to our understanding.

This beautiful and devout soul has died in a state of conscience, in which, if God gives us the grace to die, we shall be too blessed to die, at whatever time it

may be. Let us acknowledge this grace which God has shown her, and quietly have patience for the little time we have to live here below without her, since we have hope of living with her eternally in heaven, in an indissoluble and invariable society. Sir, I will pour out blessings all my life on Madam, your dear departed, and I will be invariably yours, &c.

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LETTER XI.

TO A FRIEND.

*He consoles him on the death of his brother.*

MY DEAR BROTHER (for I am in the place of the one whom our good God has withdrawn to himself),— I am told that you weep continually over this truly very painful separation. This must not be; either you weep for him or for yourself; if for him, why weep that our brother is in Paradise, where tears have no more place? but if for yourself, is there not therein too much self-love?

I speak with you quite frankly; for one would think that you love yourself more than his happiness, which is incomparable. And do you wish that, for your sake, your brother should not be with him who gives all of us life, movement, and being, so long as we acquiesce in his holy pleasure and Divine will?

But come and see us, and often, and *we will turn tears into joy*,\* recalling together that joy which our

\* John xvi. 20.

good brother is enjoying, and which shall never more be taken from him ; and in general, think often on it and on him. Thus you will live joyful, as, with all my heart, I wish you to be. I heartily recommend myself to your prayers, and assure you that I am yours, &c.

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## LETTER XII.

### TO A MAN OF THE WORLD.

*The Saint tells him what eternal life is, and that we must practice the love of God to aspire to it.*

*Anney, 24th August, 1613.*

SIR,—Amid the lassitudes and other inconveniences which illness has left behind, I have prepared the document which you pleased to desire of me, and I have added to it an abridgment, that it might be more easy to carry and look at in your confessions. The large one is, as it were, in reserve for you, to have recourse to in your difficulties, and to find in it the illustration of what might be obscure in the abridgment. The whole is in good faith, without art or colour ; for these matters want none, simplicity being their beauty, as in God who is the author of them. You will find, sir, marks of my illness ; for if I had written this little work in full health, I would, without doubt, have taken stricter care to make it less unworthy of your acceptance. Neither have I been

able to write it myself; but those who have written it have no notion of the use for which I meant it.

Blessed be God eternally for the goodness which he shows towards your soul, sir, inspiring it so powerfully to the resolution of consecrating the rest of your mortal life to the service of the eternal life. Eternal life, which is no other thing than the Divinity itself, in so far as it will vivify our souls with his glory and felicity; a life which is the only true life, and for which alone we ought to live in this world, since all life which has not its term in a living eternity, is rather death than life.

But, sir, if God has so lovingly inspired you to aspire to the eternity of glory he has just so far forth obliged you to receive humbly, and carry out carefully his inspiration, under pain of being deprived of this grace and glory. And the mere name of this loss fills with terror a heart which has the least degree of feeling.

Wherefore, in the simplicity of my soul, I conjure you, sir, to be very attentive to preserve well what you have, that you may not lose your crown. You are undoubtedly called to a masculine, courageous, valiant, invariable devotion—to serve as a mirror to many in favour of the truth of celestial love, in reparation of past faults, if ever you have been a mirror of the vanity of terrestrial love.

See, I beg you, sir, with what liberty I let my spirit act towards yours, and how this name of father, with which it has pleased you to honour me, carries

me away. For it has entered into my heart, and my affections have set themselves to the laws of love which the name father signifies, the greatest, the liveliest, and the strongest of all loves. In harmony with which I must beg you again, sir, to practise diligently the exercises which I mark in chapters x, xi, xii, xiii, of the Second part of the *Introduction*, for the morning and the evening, for the spiritual retreat, and for aspirations to God. The goodness of your soul, and the noble courage which God has given you, will serve you greatly for this practice, which will be so much the more easy to you as it is only necessary to employ in it moments which are stolen or justly detached, on occasion, here and there, from other affairs. The tenth part of an hour, or even less, will suffice for the morning, and the same for the evening.

Oh ! if you could gently deceive your dear soul, sir, and instead of undertaking to communicate every month during a year, a year of twelve months, would, when you have finished the twelfth, add the thirteenth, then the fourteenth, then the fifteenth, and go on thus continuing from month to month ! What a happiness to your heart, which, in proportion as it would receive its Saviour oftener, would also convert itself more perfectly into him ! And this, sir, could well be done without noise, without injury to your affairs, and without giving the world anything to say. Experience has made me realize in my twenty-five years of serving souls, the all-powerful virtue of this Divine

Sacrament, to strengthen hearts in good, exempt them from evil, console them, and in a word deify them in this world, if it be frequented with faith, purity, and devotion.

But enough is said, sir; heavenly influences, your good angel and your generosity, will supply what my insufficiency does not permit me to propose to you. Also, I pray our Lord to make you more and more abound in his favours, and I am, without end, &c.

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LETTER XIII.

TO A MAN OF THE WORLD.

*On the fear of death and of the judgments of God.*

SIR,—I am truly in a great trouble to know how much you have suffered in this severe and painful illness, from which, as I hope, you will recover. I should have had very much more pain if on every hand I had not been assured that, thanks to God, you have been in no sort of danger, and that you begin to take up your strength, and are in the way of health again.

But what gives me more apprehension now is that besides the evil you suffer through corporal infirmities, you are overcharged with a violent melancholy: for I know how much this will retard the return of your health, and indeed work in the opposite direction.

It is here, sir, that my heart is greatly oppressed; and according to the greatness of the lively and ex-

treme affection with which it cherishes you (beyond what can be said), it has an extraordinary compassion for yours. If you please, sir, tell me, I beg you, what reason have you for nourishing this sad humour which is so prejudicial to you? I fancy your mind is still embarrassed with some fear of sudden death, and of the judgments of God. Alas! what a dreadful torment is this! My soul, which endured it for six weeks, is very capable of compassionating those who are afflicted with it.

But, sir, I must speak a little with you, heart to heart, and tell you, that whoever has a true desire to serve our Lord and to avoid sin, ought not at all to disquiet himself with the thought of death or of the Divine judgments. Although both are to be feared, still the fear should not be of that terrible and terrifying nature which beats down and depresses the vigour and strength of the soul, but should be a fear so mixed with confidence in the goodness of God as by this means to become gentle.

And it behoves not, sir, that we doubt whether we may trust in God when we find it difficult to keep from sin, or when we imagine or fear that in occasions and temptations we may not be able to resist. Oh! no, sir; for distrust of our strength is not a failure of resolution, but a true acknowledgment of our misery. It is a better state of mind to distrust our own power of resistance to temptation than to look on ourselves as sufficiently strong and safe. Only we must take care that what we do not expect from our strength we



do expect from the grace of God. Hence many, with great consolation, have promised themselves to do wonders for God, who, when it came to the point, have failed; and many who have had great distrust of their strength, and great fear of failing on trial, have suddenly done wonders: because this great sense of their weakness has urged them to seek the aid and succour of God, to watch, pray, and humble themselves, so as not to enter into temptation.

I say that if we feel we should have neither strength nor even any courage to resist temptation, if it presented itself at once to us, provided that we still would desire to resist it, and hope that if it came God would help us, and if we ask his help, we must by no means distress ourselves, since it is not necessary always to feel strength and courage. It suffices that we hope and desire to have it in time and place; and it is not necessary to feel in ourselves any sign or any mark that we shall have this courage; it is enough that we hope God will help us.

Samson, who was called the strong, never felt the supernatural strength with which God helped him except at the actual times; and hence it is said that when he met the lions or the enemies, the spirit of God came upon him to kill them. So God, who does nothing in vain, does not give us the strength or the courage when there is no need to use them, but at the necessary time nothing is wanting; hence we must always hope that in all occurrences he will help us, if we call upon him. And we should always use

the words of David : *Why are you sorrowful, my soul, and why do you disquiet me ? Hope in the Lord ;\** and his prayer : *When my strength fails, O Lord, forsake me not.* † Well, then, since you desire to be entirely God's, why do you fear from your weakness, in which you are to put no sort of trust ? Do you not hope in God ? Ah ! *He who trusteth in him, shall he ever be confounded ?* ‡ No, sir, he shall never be. I beseech you, sir, to quell all the objections which might arise in your mind. You need make no other answer to them save that you desire to be faithful on all occasions, and that you hope God will make you so. There is no need to test your spirit, to see whether it would or no ; these tests are illusive ; many are valiant while they do not see the enemy, who are not valiant in his presence ; and, on the contrary, many fear before battle, to whom the actual danger gives courage. We must not fear fear.

So much on this point, sir. Meanwhile, God knows what I would do and suffer to see you entirely delivered. I am your, &c.

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#### LETTER XIV.

TO THE PRESIDENT FRÉMIOT.

*The Saint engages him to prepare for death.*

*Sales, 7th October, 1604.*

SIR,—Charity is equally easy in giving and in receiving good impressions of our neighbour ; but if to its

\* Ps. xli.

† Ps. lxx.

‡ Ecclus. ii. 11.

general inclination we add that of some particular friendship, it becomes excessive in this facility. Monsieur de Bourges, and Madame de Chantal, your worthy and dear children, have doubtless been too favourable in the desire with which they have inspired you to wish me well: for I see clearly, sir, by the letter you have written me, that they have employed colours in it, with which my wretched soul was never painted. And you, sir, have not been less ready, nor, I believe, less pleased, to give them an ample and liberal belief. *Charity*, says the Apostle, *believeth all things, and rejoiceth with the truth.\**

In this only were they unable to exceed in saying, or you in believing, that I have devoted to them all my affections. Thus these affections are yours, since these children are yours, with all they have.

Allow me, sir, to let my pen follow my thoughts in answering your letter. I have truly recognized in M. de Bourges such an ingenuous goodness of mind and of heart, that I have let myself confer with him about the duties of our common vocation with so much liberty, that, returning to myself, I did not know which had used more simplicity, he in listening to me, or I in speaking to him. And, sir, friendships founded on Jesus Christ do not cease to be respectful for being extremely simple and in good faith. We are well cut out for the profit of one another; our desires to serve God and his Church (for I confess that I have some, and he cannot conceal that he is

\* 1 Cor. xiii.

full of them) have been, it seems to me, sharpened and animated by contact.

But, sir, you wish me to continue the conversation on this subject by letters. I assure you that if I would I could not hinder myself from doing so ; and, in fact, I am sending him a letter of four sheets, and all of that material. No, sir, I pay no attention to what I am less than he, nor to what he is more than I, and in so many ways : *amor æquat amantes* (love equalizes lovers). I speak to him faithfully, and with all the confidence my soul can have in his soul, which I consider most frank, true, and vigorous in friendship.

And as for Madame de Chantal, I would rather say nothing of the desire I have of her eternal good than too little.

But has not the President of Finance, your good brother, told you that he loves me also very much ? I will tell you, at least, that I consider myself quite certain of it.

There are no persons in your house, down to the little Celse-Bénigne and your Aimée,\* who do not know me, and love me.

See, sir, if I am not yours, and by how many links ; I abuse your goodness in displaying to you my affections so extravagantly. But, sir, whoever provokes me to contention about love must be very firm, for I spare him not.

So must I then obey you again in your command to write down for you the principal points of your duty.

\* Children of Madame de Chantal.

I prefer to obey at peril of discretion, rather than to be discreet at peril of obedience. It is in truth an obedience a little bitter to me, but you will rightly judge that it is the more worth. You exceed indeed in humility when you make me this request; why may I not exceed in simplicity when I obey you?

Sir, I know that you have passed a long and very honourable life, and have always been very constant in the Holy Catholic Church; but, after all, it has been in the world, and in the management of affairs. It is a strange thing, but experience and authors witness it: a horse, however fine and strong he may be, travelling on the paths and trail of the wolf, becomes giddy and stumbles. *It is not possible* that living in the world, though we only touch it with our feet, *we be not soiled with its dust.* Thus says St. Leo.

Our ancient fathers, Abraham and the others, usually offered to their guests the washing of their feet; I think, sir, that the first thing to be done is to wash the affections of our souls in order to receive the hospitality of our good God in his paradise.

It seems to me that it is always a great matter of reproach to mortals to die without having thought of this; but doubly so to those whom God has favoured with the blessing of old age.

Those who get ready before the alarm is given, always put on their armour better than those who, on the fright, run hither and thither for the cuirass, the cuisses, and the helmet.

We must leisurely say good-by to the world, and

little by little withdraw our affections from creatures. Trees which the wind tears up are not proper to transplant, because they leave their roots in the earth ; but he who would carry trees into another soil must skilfully disengage little by little all the roots one after the other. And since from this miserable land we are to be transplanted into that of the living, we must withdraw and disengage our affections one after the other from this world. I do not say that we must roughly break all the ties we have formed (it would, perhaps, require immense efforts for that), but we must unsew and untie them.

Those who depart suddenly are excusable for not saying good-by to their friends, and for starting with a poor set out ; but not so those who have known the probable time of their journey ; they must keep ready, not, indeed, as if to start before the time, but to await it with more tranquillity.

For this end, I think, sir, that you will have an incredible consolation if you choose from each day an hour, to think before God and your good angel, on what is necessary to make a happy departure. What order would your affairs be in if you knew it would be soon ? I know these thoughts will not be new to you ; but the way of making them must be new in the presence of God, with a tranquil attention, and rather to move the affections, than to enlighten the intellect.

St. Jerome has more than once applied to the wisdom of the old the history of Abisag, the Sunamitess. Wisdom and the consideration of philosophy often

engage young people ; it is more to recreate their spirit than to excite good movements in their affections ; but they should not be with the old except to give them the true warmth of devotion.

I have seen and enjoyed your fine library ; I present you, for your spiritual lesson on this matter, St. Ambrose, *De bono mortis* (of the advantage of death), St. Bernard, *De interiore domo* (of the interior house), and several scattered homilies of St. Chrysostom.

Your St. Bernard says that the soul should first go and kiss the *feet* of the crucifix, to rectify its affections, and to resolve, with firm resolution, to withdraw itself little by little from the world and its vanities ; then kiss the *hands*, by that newness of actions which follows the change of affections ; and finally kiss the *mouth*, uniting self by an ardent love to the supreme goodness. This is the true progress of a becoming departure.

It is said that Alexander the Great, sailing on the wide ocean, discovered, alone and first, Arabia Felix, by the scent of its aromatic trees. He was at first the only one to perceive it, because he alone was seeking it. Those who are seeking after the eternal country, though sailing on the high sea of the affairs of this world, have a certain presentiment of heaven, which animates and encourages them marvellously. But they must keep themselves before the wind, and their prow turned in the proper direction.

We owe ourselves to God, to our country, to

parents, to friends. To God, firstly; then to our country, but first to our heavenly country; secondly, to our earthly. Then we owe ourselves to our near ones, but *no one is so near as ourself*, says our Christian Seneca;\* in fine, to friends; but are you not the first of your friends? He remarks that St. Paul says to Timothy: *Attend to yourself and to your flock*;† first to yourself, then to your flock.

This is quite enough, sir, if not too much, for this year, which flies and melts away before us, and in these two next months will make us see the vanity of its existence like all the preceding, which exist no more. You commanded me to write you every year something of this sort. I am now straight for this year, in which I beseech you to withdraw your affections from the world as much as possible, and in proportion as you withdraw them to transport them to heaven.

And pardon me, I beseech you, by your own humility, if my simplicity has been so extravagant in its obedience as to write to you, at such length and freedom on a simple demand, and with the full sense that I have of your abundant wisdom, which should keep me either in silence or in an exact moderation. Here are waters, sir; if they come from the jawbone of an ass, Samson will not refuse to drink of them. I pray God to heap up your years with his benedictions, and I am, with an entirely filial affection, sir, &c.

\* Boethius.

† Acts xx. 28.



BOOK V.  
VARIOUS LETTERS.

LETTER I.

TO A LADY.

*Consolations and advice to a person who had a lawsuit.*

19th September, 1610.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER,—I know the multitude of your troubles, and have recommended them to our Lord. May it please him to bless them with the sacred benediction with which he has blessed his dearest servants, that they may be used for the hallowing of his holy name in your soul.

And I must confess that though, in my opinion, afflictions which regard our own persons, and the afflictions which come from sins, are more trying, still the afflictions of lawsuits cause me more pity, because more dangerous for the soul. How many people have we seen at peace in the thorns of sicknesses and loss of friends, who lose interior peace in the worry of exterior lawsuits! And this is the reason, or rather the cause without reason: we have difficulty

in believing that the evil of suits is employed by God for our trial, because we see that they are men who prosecute. We do not dare to resist that all-good, all-wise Providence, but we resist the men who afflict us, and we quarrel with them, not without danger of losing charity, the only loss we ought to fear in this life.

But then, my dearest daughter, when shall we show our fidelity to our Lord if not in these occasions? When shall we restrain our heart, our judgment, and our tongue, unless in these places, which are so rough and so near to precipices? For God's sake, my dearest daughter, let not a time so favourable to your spiritual progress pass without collecting plenty of fruits of patience, humility, sweetness, and love of abjection. Remember that our Lord said not a single word against those who condemned him. He did not judge them; he was wrongly judged and condemned, and he remained in peace, and died in peace, and revenged himself only in praying for them. And we, my dearest daughter, we judge our judges and our opponents; we arm ourselves with complaints and reproaches.

Believe me, my dearest daughter, we must be strong and constant in the love of our neighbours, and I say this with all my heart, without regard either to your opponents, or to what they are to me; and I know that nothing affects me in this matter save jealousy for your perfection. But I must stop, and I did not mean to say even so much. You will have God

always, when you please. And is not this to be rich enough? I beg that his will may be your repose, and his cross your glory. I am without end, your, &c.

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## LETTER II.

TO A LADY.

*Advice during an illness.—We must obey the doctor.*

29th September, 1608.

I UNDERSTAND, my dear daughter, that you have an illness, more troublesome than dangerous, and I know that such illnesses are prone to spoil the obedience we owe to the doctors; wherefore I tell you not to deprive yourself of the rest, or the medicines, or the food, or the recreations appointed you; you can exercise a kind of obedience and resignation in this which will make you extremely agreeable to our Lord. In fine, behold a quantity of crosses and mortifications which you have neither chosen nor wished. God has given you them with his holy hand; receive them, kiss them, love them. My God! they are all perfumed with the dignity of the place whence they come.

Good-by, my dear daughter, I cherish you earnestly: if I had leisure I would say more, for I am infinitely pleased that you are faithful in these little and troublesome occurrences, and that in little as in great things you say always: *Vive Jésus!* Your, &c.

## LETTER III.

TO A LADY.

*Sickness may purify the soul as well as the body.*

26th April, 1615.

MADAM,—I have heard of your sickness, and I do not forget to pay the duty I owe so dear a daughter. If God hears my prayers, you will rise with a great increase of health (*santé*), and above all of holiness (*sainteté*); for often these accidents leave us with this double advantage—the fever has dispersed the evil humours of the body, and purified the humours of the heart, as being trials from the hand of Almighty God.

I do not mean to call you a saint when I speak of an increase of sanctity in you, certainly not, my dearest daughter; it is not for my heart to flatter yours: but though you are not a saint your good desires are saintly, I well know, and I wish them to become so great as to be changed at last into perfect devotion, sweetness, patience, and humility.

Fill all your heart with courage, and your courage with confidence in God; for he who has given you the first attractions of his sacred love will never abandon you. These I beg him with all my heart to give; and am, without end, your most humble servant, and your husband's, whom, my dearest daughter, I have just seen.

## LETTER IV.

TO A YOUNG LADY WHO WAS SICK.

*Consolations.*

8th February, 1621.

THESE are great fires, my dearest child; fever, like a fire, burns your body; fire, like a fever, burns your house; but I hope that the fire of heavenly love so occupies your heart, that in all occasions you say, *The Lord has given me my health and my house: the Lord has taken them away: as it has pleased the Lord, be it done, his holy name be blessed.\**

Yes, you say, but it impoverishes and inconveniences us greatly. Quite true, my dearest daughter; but, *Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.†* You should have before your eyes the suffering and the patience of Job, and regard that great prince on the dunghill. He had patience, and God at last doubled his temporal and increased a hundredfold his eternal goods.

You are a child of Jesus Christ crucified; what wonder then if you share his cross? *I was silent, said David, and have not opened my mouth, because it is you, O Lord, who did it.‡* Oh! by how many difficult ways do we go to holy eternity! *Throw all your confidence and solicitude on God: he will have care of you,§* and will hold out a favouring hand. Thus I pray

\* Job i. 21.

† Matt. v. 3.

‡ Ps. xxxviii. 10.

§ Ps. liv. 23.

him, with all my heart ; and in proportion as he sends you tribulations, may he, in his holy care, strengthen you to bear them.

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LETTER V.

TO A LADY.

*How to behave in great sufferings.*

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—Let us leave meditation for a short time—it is only to spring better that we step back ; and let us practise well that holy resignation and that pure love of our Lord, which is never entirely practised save in troubles ; for to love God in sugar—little children would do as much ; but to love him in wormwood, that is the test of our amorous fidelity. To say : *Vive Jésus*, on the mountain of Thabor, St. Peter, while still carnal, has quite courage enough ; but to say : *Vive Jésus*, on Mount Calvary—this belongs only to the Mother, and to the beloved disciple who was left to her as her son.

So then, my daughter, behold I commend you to God, to obtain for you that sacred patience ; and I cannot ask him anything for you except that he would fashion your heart just at his will, in order to lodge and reign therein eternally. May he do it with the hammer, or with the chisel, or with the brush ; it is for him to act at his pleasure. Is it not so, my dear daughter : must he not do this ?

I know that your pains have been increased lately,

and in the same measure has my sorrow for them increased; although I praise and bless our Lord with you for his good pleasure exercised in you, making you share his holy cross, and crowning you with his crown of thorns.

But, you will say, you can hardly keep your thoughts on the pains our Lord has suffered for you, while your own pangs oppress you. Well, my dear child, you are not obliged to do so, provided that you quite simply offer up your heart as frequently as you can to this Saviour, and make the following acts: 1°. Accept the pain from his hand, as if you saw him himself putting and pressing it on your head. 2°. Offer yourself to suffer more. 3°. Beg him by the merit of his torments, to accept these little distresses in union with the pains he suffered on the cross. 4°. Protest that you wish not only to suffer, but to love and cherish them as sent from so good and so sweet a hand. 5°. Invoke the martyrs and the many servants of God, who enjoy heaven for having been afflicted in this world.

There is no danger in desiring some remedy, indeed you must carefully procure it; for God, who has given you the evil, is also author of its cure. You must then apply it, yet with such resignation that, if his Divine majesty wishes the evil to conquer, you will acquiesce; and if he wishes the remedy to succeed, you will bless him for it.

There is no harm, while performing your spiritual exercises, in being seated. None at all, my daughter;

nor would there be for difficulties much less than those you suffer.

How happy are you, my daughter, if you continue to keep yourself under the hand of God, humbly, sweetly, and pliantly! Ah! I hope this headache will much profit your heart; your heart, which mine cherishes with quite a special love. Now, my daughter, it is that you may, more than ever, and by very good signs, prove to our sweet Saviour that it is with all your affection you have said and will say: *Vive Jésus! Vive Jésus!* my child, and may he reign amid your pains, since we can neither reign nor live save by the pain of his death. I am in him entirely yours.

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## LETTER VI.

### TO A LADY.

*In these letters and the following, the Saint exhorts this lady, who was aged and infirm, and whom he calls his mother, to lift up her desires towards heaven, to love crosses, to have patience and gentleness with the persons who waited on her.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—What shall I say to you? Only a word, for want of time.

Continually practise your heart in interior and exterior sweetness, and keep it in quiet, amid the multiplicity of your affairs.

Keep yourself very earnestly from eager anxiety (*empressement*), the pest of true devotion, and continue



to keep your soul above, only regarding this world to despise it, and time to aspire to eternity.

Often submit your will to the will of God, ready to adore it as much when it sends you tribulations as in the time of consolations.

God be ever in the midst of our hearts, my dearest mother ! I am in him, without reserve, and with an affection quite filial, your, &c.

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LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

*Same Subject.*

THOUGH this messenger goes expressly, my dear mother, he starts at a time when I am very much engaged. That good lady has told me from you what you confided to her, and I praise God that he has given you new affections with this new health ; but you must take good notice, my dearest daughter, my mother, that body and spirit often go in contrary movements ; as one grows weak, the other grows strong, and when one grows strong, the other grows weak. But as it is the spirit which must reign, when we see that it has taken up its powers, we must so aid and establish it, that it may remain always the stronger. Without doubt, my dear mother, since sicknesses are crucibles, our heart should come out from them more pure, and amidst our infirmities we should become more strong.

Now, as to yourself, I fancy that in the future your age and the delicate state of your constitution will often make you languid and feeble, wherefore I advise you to exercise yourself much in the will of God, and in the abnegation of exterior satisfactions, and in sweetness amid bitterness. This will be the most excellent sacrifice you can make. Hold good, and practise, not only a solid love, but a tender, gentle, and sweet love towards those about you : on which I say, by the experience I have, that infirmity, though it does not take away charity, yet takes away sweetness towards our neighbour, if we are not greatly on our guard.

My dearest mother, I wish you the height of perfection, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

I remain for ever your, &c.

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## LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

*Same Subject.*

ALAS ! my God ! dearest mother, how surprised was I to learn from your letter, as it were all on a sudden, the length and the danger of your malady ! For believe, I pray, that my heart cherishes you filially. God be praised that you seem to have almost got free.

Truly, I see well that for the future you must grow

familiar with maladies and infirmities in this decline of age in which you are. Lord Jesus! what true happiness to a soul dedicated to God, to be well exercised by tribulation before departing this life! My dearest mother, how can one know sincere and strong love save amid thorns, crosses, languors, and above all, when the *languors* are accompanied with *longueurs* (*i.e.*, are long).

In such way our dear Saviour has shown his unmeasured love by the measure of his labours and pains. My dearest mother, dearly make love to the Spouse of your heart on the bed of pain; for it is on this bed that he has made love to your heart, even before it came into the world, seeing it as yet only in his Divine intention.

Ah! this Saviour has counted all your pains, all your sufferings, and has bought, at the price of his blood, all the patience and all the love necessary to apply holily all your labours to his glory and your salvation. Be content quietly to will to be all that God wants you to be. Never will I fail to beseech the Divine Majesty for the perfection of your heart, which mine loves, cherishes, and tenderly honours.

Adieu, my dearest mother, and my dearest child, again; let us be God's eternally, ourselves and our affections and our little pains and our great ones, and all that the Divine goodness wills to be ours; and I am in him, my dearest mother, absolutely your true son, &c.

## LETTER IX.

TO A LADY.

*It is permitted to mourn the dead with moderation and resignation.**Long sicknesses are advantageous.*

So, then, my dearest daughter, I am just told that your dear sister is gone, leaving us here below with the affections of grief, which generally attack those left behind in such separations. O God! I take care, my dearest child, not to say "weep not." No, for it is very just and reasonable that you should weep a little, but a *little*, my dear child, in testimony of the sincere love you bore her; in imitation of our dear Master who certainly wept a little over his friend Lazarus; but we must not weep much, as those do, who, contracting all their thoughts to the moments of this miserable life, remember not that we also are going towards eternity, where, if we live well in this life, we shall rejoin our dear departed ones, never to leave them again.

We cannot hinder our poor heart from feeling the condition of this life, and the loss of those who were our delightful companions therein; but we must not, for all this, betray the solemn profession we have made to join our will inseparably to that of our God.

How happy is that dear sister, to have seen come, little by little, and from afar, this hour of her departure! For thus she prepared herself to make it holily. Let us adore this Divine Providence, and say: Yes,

you are blessed, and all that pleases you is good. My God! dearest child, how sweetly should these little events be received by our hearts: our hearts, I say, which henceforth ought to have more affection in heaven than on earth! I will pray to God for this soul, and for the consolation of those who are his.

Do not put yourself in trouble about your prayer, nor about this variety of desires which you have, for the variety of affections is not bad, nor the desire of many distinct virtues.

As to your resolutions, you may particularize them thus:—I will practise more faithfully the virtues which are necessary to me; as, for example, on such an occasion which may present itself, I am prepared to practise such a virtue; and so forth.

It is not necessary to use words, even interior ones; it suffices to excite the heart, or to repose it on our Lord; it suffices to regard amorously this Divine lover of our souls, for between lovers, eyes speak better than tongue.

I write without leisure, and in presence of the bearer. Good night, then, my dearest child; pour the death of our sister into that of our Saviour. Regard this death of our sister only in that of our Redeemer. May his will be for ever glorified! Amen.

Your very humble servant, &c.

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## LETTER X.

TO A RELIGIOUS OF THE VISITATION.

*On want of reverence in church.*

27th December, 1615.

THE temptation to laugh in Church and at Office is bad, though it may seem only silly and childish ; for after charity the virtue of religion is the most excellent. As charity renders to our Lord according to our power, the love which is due to him, so religion renders him due honour and reverence ; and hence the faults which are committed against it are very bad. It is true that in yours I do not see great sin, as it is against the will ; but yet you must not leave it without some penance. When the enemy cannot make our souls Marion, he makes our hearts Robin ;\* and it does not matter to him, provided that time is lost, the spirit dissipated, and somebody scandalized. But, look you, dear child of my heart, do not frighten these good daughters ; for from one extreme they might pass to the other, which must not be.

I do not yet tell you my thoughts on the subject you write to me about, for to-day is in Christmas-tide, when the angels come to seek Paradise on earth. Certainly it has descended into the little cavern of Bethlehem, in which, my dear child, I shall find you in these days with all our dear sisters, who doubtless

\* Adapting a proverbial expression (*Robin a trouvé Marion*)—a rogue hath found his like.

will make their abode, like wise bees, with their little King. Those who humble themselves lowest will see him nearest; for he is lost in the very depths of humility, of courageous, confident and constant humility. May this sweet Infant be for ever, my dearest daughter, the life of your heart, which I cherish incomparably, and which is always present to mine, so long as it pleases God that my love should strengthen itself by want of exterior manifestation.

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## LETTER XI.

TO A LADY.

*The way not to offend God in the pleasure of the chase.**Annecy, 20th June, 1610.*

You see, my dearest daughter, what confidence I have in you. I have not written to you since your departure, because really I have not been able to do so; and I make you no excuse, because you are truly, and more and more, my more than most dear daughter.

God be praised for that your journey back has been made nicely and quietly, and that you have found your husband happy. Truly, that heavenly Providence of the heavenly Father treats with sweetness the children of his heart, and from time to time mingles favourable sweetnesses with the fruitful bitternesses which merit them.

M. Michel asked me what I wrote to M. Legrand about hunting; but, my dearest daughter, it was only a little thing in which I told him there were three laws to observe in order to avoid offending God in the chase.

1°. Not to do damage to our neighbour, it being not reasonable that any one should take his recreation at the expense of another, and specially in treading down the poor peasant, who is already martyred enough otherwise, and whose labour and condition we should not despise.

2°. Not to employ in hunting the time of the chief feasts, in which we ought to serve God: and above all, to take care not to omit Mass on the days commanded.

2°. Not to spend too much on it, for all recreations become blameworthy when extravagant.

I do not remember the rest. In general, discretion must reign everywhere.

So then, my dearest daughter, may God be ever in the midst of your heart, to unite all your affections to his holy love. Amen.

So has he, I assure you, put in my heart a most unchanging and entire affection for yours, which I cherish unceasingly, praying God to crown it with blessing. Amen, my very dear, and always more very dear, daughter.

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## LETTER XII. XII

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*Thoughts on the renewal of the year.*

28th December, 1605.

I END this year, my dear child, with a desire not only great but ardent to advance for the future in that holy love, which I cease not to love though I have not yet tasted it. Thank God, my child, our heart (notice, I say *our*) is made for that. Ah! why are we not all full of it? You cannot imagine the sense which I have at present of this desire. O God! For what shall we live through the next year save to love this sovereign goodness better! Oh! that it may take us from this world, or that it may take this world from us; may it make us die, or else make us love his death better than our poor life!

My God! how I wish you, my child, in Bethlehem now with your holy Abbess (the blessed Virgin)! Ah! how well it becomes her to bring forth, and to nurse this little Infant! But chiefly I love her charity, which lets him be seen and held and kissed by anybody. Ask her for him, she will give him; and when you have him, steal secretly from him one of those little droplets which are in his eyes. They are not yet the rain, but only the first dew-drops of his tears. It is a marvel how good this liquor is for every sort of disease of the heart.

Do not load yourself with austerities this Lent,

without your confessor's leave, and he, by my advice, will not load you with them. May God deign to crown your year, beginning with roses, which his blood has coloured! Adieu, my dear child; I am he who has dedicated to you his entire service.

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LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

*Wishes of blessing for the New Year.*

*29th December, 1606.*

BEHOLD this year, my dearest child, about to lose itself in the gulf in which all the preceding are swallowed up. Oh! how desirable is eternity, at the price of these miserable and perishable vicissitudes! Let time flow, with which we ourselves flow away little by little, to be transformed into the glory of the children of God.

This is the last time I write to you this year, my dear child. Ah! what blessings I wish you, and with what ardour! It cannot be expressed. Alas! when I think how I have used God's time, I am in great fear lest he should not will to give me his eternity, since he does not will to give it save to those who use his time well.

I am three months without letters from you; but I know God is with you, that is enough for me; it is he that I wish you only. I write without leisure, for

my room is full of people who draw me away; but my heart is solitary all the time, and full of desire to live for ever entirely for this holy love, which is the only object of this same heart of mine.

At any rate, during these sacred days a thousand desires have seized me to give you the glorious satisfaction you so much desire from my soul, as from your very own, by advancing solicitously towards holy perfection. To this you also aspire, and by this you respire, for the good of my heart, which in return wishes you for ever all the highest union with God which can be had here below. This is the only wish of him whom God has given you.

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## LETTER XIV.

TO A LADY.

*Wishes for the New Year.**29th December, 1606.*

WELL, now, what matters it to your dear soul, my dearest daughter, whether I write to you in one style or in another, since it asks nothing from me except the assurance of my worthless health, about which I do not deserve that any one should have the least thought in the world? But I will tell you that it is good, thanks to our Lord, and that I hope it will serve me well these holy feasts for preaching, as it has done in the Advent, and that so we shall complete this year to begin a new one.

O God ! my dear child, these years pass away, and glide off imperceptibly one after the other ; and in winding off their length, they wind off our mortal life, and in ending they end our days. Oh ! how infinitely more to be loved is eternity, since its duration is endless, and its days without nights, and its satisfactions unchanging.

May you, my dearest daughter, possess this admirable good of holy eternity in as high degree as I wish it you ! What happiness for my soul, if God, having mercy on it, made it see this consolation ! But while waiting to see our Lord glorified, let us see him with the eyes of faith all humbled in his little crib. May God be ever in the midst of your heart, my dearest daughter. Amen.

*Vive Jésus !*

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## LETTER XV.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*Same Subject.*

O JESUS ! fill our heart with the sacred balm of your Divine name, that the sweetness of its perfume may spread into all our senses, and over all our acts. But to make this heart capable of receiving so sweet a liquor, circumcise it, and cut off from it all that can be disagreeable to your holy eyes. O glorious name, which the mouth of the heavenly Father has pro-

nounced eternally, be for ever the superscription of our souls, that, as you are Saviour, our soul may be eternally saved! O holy Virgin, who, first of all the human race, have pronounced this name of salvation, inspire us how to pronounce it fittingly, that all may breathe in us the salvation which your womb has brought us!

My dearest child, it was fitting to write the first letter of this year to our Lord and our Lady; and here is the second, by which, O my daughter, I wish you a good year, and I dedicate *our* heart to the Divine goodness. O that we may so live this year that it may serve as foundation for the eternal year! At least this morning I have on waking cried out unto your ears: *Vive Jésus!* and have longed to spread this sacred oil over all the face of the earth.

When a balm is well closed in a flask, no one can tell what liquor it is save him who has put it there; but when it is opened, and some drops have been poured out, every one says: It is balm. My dear child, our dear little Jesus was all filled with the balm of salvation; but this was not known till with that knife, lovingly cruel, his Divine flesh was opened; and then it was known that he is all balm and oil poured out, and the balm of salvation. Wherefore first St. Joseph and our Lady, then all the neighbours begin to cry Jesus, which signifies Saviour.

May it please this Divine darling (*poupon*\*) to steep our souls in his blood, and to perfume them with his

\* A pretty rosy little babe.

holy name, that the roses of good desires which we have conceived may be all empurpled with its colour, and all odorous with its unction!

My God! how aptly fits in this circumcision, my child, with our little and our great abnegations! for these are properly a spiritual circumcision. Your very affectionate, &c.

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LETTER XVI.

TO THE SAME.

*Same Subject.*

You will be the first, my dearest and best mother, who will receive a letter from me this new year. Certainly reason requires that after having done homage to the heavenly Father and Mother, I should do it also to the only mother whom Their Majesties have given me for this life. Good and most holy year to my dearest mother from her son, who wishes her the abundance of the grace of the Eternal Father, of the peace of the circumcised Son, and of the consolation of the Holy Spirit, dedicating with this same heart of my dearest mother mine also to the glory of the Divine goodness, and consecrating to it all the moments of this new year, to make an entire circumcision of this same heart, and to apply it to receive purely and perfectly the sacred love, which the heavenly and divine name of Jesus announces to us written in his blood, on the holy humanity of the Saviour.

I cannot promise myself to see you before Wednesday, unless with the continued sight with which my heart regards and guards yours dearly in the bottom of my heart. Ah! my God! dear mother, how I desire Divine love for this heart, what blessings I wish it! Let us kiss a thousand times the feet of this Saviour, and say to him: My heart, O my God, calls for you; my face longs for you: Ah! Lord, *my face seeks for yours*,\* that is, my dearest mother, let us keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, to regard him, our mouth to praise him; and in fine, let all our face aspire only to become like that of our dear Jesus. It is Jesus, for whom we must humble ourselves, commence work, and suffer; becoming, as St. Paul says, sheep for the slaughter, when it shall please his Divine Majesty to make us dishonoured for his honour and glory.

So, then, a good and most holy year to my dearest mother, all perfumed with the name of Jesus, all steeped in his sacred blood. May no day of this year, and no day of many years which I pray God to grant to my dearest mother, pass without being watered by the virtue of this blood, and receiving the sweetness of this name which spreads abroad the perfection of all sweetness. Amen.

So may this sacred name fill with its agreeable sound all the congregation of our sisters, and the drops of blood of the little Saviour become a river of sanctity to rejoice and fertilize the hearts of this dear flock,

\* Ps. xxvi. 18.

and above all, that of my dearest mother, which mine loves as myself. Blessed be Jesus! Blessed be his blood! Blessed be Mary! Blessed be her womb, from which Jesus took this blood.

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LETTER XVII.

TO A SUPERIOR OF THE VISITATION.

*The Saint tells her how to distinguish true revelations from false.*

*Anncey.*

As I could not sooner, my dearest child, I will now answer the two chief points about which you wrote to me.

In all that I have seen of this daughter, I find nothing to prevent my thinking her a very good girl, and therefore she must be loved and cherished with very good heart; but as to her revelations and predictions, they are entirely suspicious to me, as useless, vain, and unworthy of consideration. On the one side, they are so frequent that the frequency and multitude of them alone makes them merit suspicion; on the other hand, they manifest certain things which God declares very rarely, such as the assurance of eternal salvation, confirmation in grace, the degree of sanctity of several persons, and a hundred other similar things which are useful for nothing. St. Gregory, having been asked by a lady of honour to the empress, called Gregoria, about her future state,



answered her : “ Your benignity, my child, asks me for a thing equally hard and useless.” And to say that in the future it will be known why these revelations are made, is a pretext which is used to avoid the reproach of the uselessness of such things.

Further : when God wishes to use the revelations he gives to creatures, he generally sends before them either true miracles, or a very special sanctity in those who receive them. So the evil spirit, when he wants notably to deceive any one, before making him give out false revelations, makes him utter false predictions, and makes him observe a method of life falsely holy.

There was in the time of the blessed Sister Mary of the Incarnation a young person of low position, who was possessed by the most extraordinary delusion that can be imagined. The enemy, under the form of our Lord, said for a long time his office with her, with a chant so melodious that it kept her in a state of perpetual ravishment. He gave her communion very often under the appearance of a silvery and resplendent cloud, within which he made a false host come into her mouth ; he made her live without eating anything. When she took alms to the gate, he multiplied the bread in her apron, so that if she only carried bread for three poor, and there were thirty, she had enough to give to all very abundantly, and most delicious bread, some of which even her confessor, who was of a very reformed order, sent about among his spiritual friends from devotion.

This girl had so many revelations that at last it made

her suspected by people of sense. . She had one extremely dangerous, by which it was thought good to try the sanctity of this poor creature, and for this she was placed with the blessed Sister Mary of the Incarnation, then still in the married state. She was chambermaid, and being treated a little severely by Mons. Acarie, now deceased, it was found that this girl was no saint at all, and that her gentleness and exterior humility were nothing but an external gilding which the enemy used to get the pills of his illusion swallowed, and at last it was found that there was nothing in the world in her but a heap of false visions. As for her, it became well known that not only did she not maliciously deceive the world, but that she was first deceived, there being on her side no other sort of fault except the complacency she took in imagining she was a saint, and contributing a few pretences and deceitfulnesses to keep up the reputation of her vain sanctity. And all this was told me by the blessed Sister Mary of the Incarnation.

Consider, I pray you, my dearest child, the shrewdness and cunning of the enemy, and how deserving of suspicion these extraordinary things are. Still, as I have said, you must not treat this poor girl amiss, who, I think, has no other fault in this affair than that of the vain amusement she takes in her vain imaginations.

Only, my dearest sister, you must show a total neglect and a perfect contempt of all her revelations and visions, just as if she were relating the dreams or

reveries of a high fever; not occupying yourself in refuting or combating them; but, on the contrary, when she wishes to speak of them, you must change the subject. You must talk to her of the solid virtues and perfections of the religious state, and particularly of the simplicity of faith, in which the saints have walked, without any visions or private revelations, content to believe firmly in the revelation of the Holy Scripture, and of the Apostolic and Church doctrine; very often impress on her the sentence of our Lord, that there will be many workers of miracles and many prophets to whom he will say at the end of the world: *Depart from me, workers of iniquity; I know you not.*\* But commonly you must say to this girl: Let us talk of our lesson which our Lord has ordered us to learn, saying: *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.*† And, in fine, you must show an absolute contempt for all these revelations.

And as to the good father who seems to approve them, you must not rebuff him or dispute with him, but simply say that to test all this affair of revelations it seems good to despise them and take no account of them. This then is my opinion for the present on this point.

I had forgotten to say that the visions and revelations of this girl must not be found strange, because the facility and tenderness of the imagination of young women makes them much more susceptible of these illusions than men; on which account their sex is more

\* Mat. vii. 22, 23.

† Mat. xi. 29.

given to faith in dreams, the fear about sins, and credulity in superstitions. They often fancy they see what they see not, hear what they hear not, and feel what they feel not.

You must then treat this spirit by contempt of these fancies, but a gentle and serious contempt, and not a mocking or disdainful one. It may well be that the evil spirit has some part in these deceits, but I think rather that he lets the imagination act, without co-operating with it by simple suggestions. The similitude brought forward to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity is very pretty, but is not beyond the capacity of a soul which takes complacency in its own imaginations.

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## LETTER XVIII.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*Considerations on the Feast of the Conception of the Holy Virgin, and on a Cope which he had received.*

O TRULY this cope is lovely in the extreme, which the dearest mother that lives sends to her dearest father : for it is all in the name of Jesus and of Mary, and represents perfectly the heaven of the blessed where Jesus is the sun, and Mary the moon, a luminary present to all the stars of this heavenly abode ; for Jesus there is all to all ; and there is no star in this heavenly

day in which he is not reflected as in a mirror; and the double *phi's* \* signify, as capital letters, philothey† and philanthropy, love of God and love of our neighbour; and the *ss* closed, with their arrows, which ascend on one side and descend on the other, show the exercise of these Divine loves, one of which ascends to God, and makes philotheists; the other descends to our neighbour, and makes philanthropists, both being the one good of charity, which makes us true servants of the Divine Majesty. Over all flows out the Holy Spirit, and makes appear a great variety of flowers and all sorts of virtues.

Blessed be for ever the dear hand of the mother who was able so skilfully to make so beautiful a work. *May her hand be fit to do strong things, and equally to manage the spindle.*‡ May it be adorned with the ring of fidelity, and her arm with the bracelet of charity; may the right hand of the Saviour be for ever joined to it, and may it appear full in the day of judgment; may the heart which animates it be ever clothed with Jesus, with Mary, with philothey, philanthropy, sanctity; with stars, with flying darts of heavenly love, and with all sorts of flowering virtues; may the Holy Spirit shine on it always. Good-night, my very dear daughter, my mother.

But I must say this further. It is written of the strong woman that *all her people have double*

\* Letters of the Greek alphabet which some ornament on the cope resembled.

† To coin a word.

‡ Prov. xxxi.

*vestments* :\* one, I think, for the feasts, the other for working days; and here I am clothed with an admirable cope for feasts; a lovely cope, and of Easter colour, and also with a robe for every day, of the colour of the robe which our Saviour wore on the Mount of the Passion. May God our Lord clothe you with his passion and with his glory!

I will do for your daughter of St. Catherine all I can; and believe me I will do it with all the more sweetness because you wish it. For I have an extreme sweetness in doing your will. Alas! what a heart should we have to do that of the most loved Creator, since we have so much for the creature loved and united to us in him!

Yes, my dearest mother, put your soul quite into the hands of our dear Mistress, who will be conceived this night in the commemoration we make of her, and I will ask it from her; for, my dear mother, I am quite resolved to have no heart but what she gives me, this sweet Mother of hearts, this Mother of holy love, this Mother of the heart of hearts. Ah! God, what a great desire have I to keep my eyes on this beautiful star of our voyage! Good-by, my dearest mother, be all joyous on the occasion of this coming feast. May Jesus be our heart. Amen.

\* Prov. xxxi.

## BOOK VI.

### VARIOUS LETTERS.

#### LETTER I.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*On the Feast of our Lord's Nativity.*

MAY the great and little infant of Bethlehem be for ever the darling and the love of our hearts, my dearest mother, my child! Ah! how lovely he is, this dear baby. I seem to see Solomon on his grand throne of ivory, gilded and worked, which had no equal in the kingdoms, as the Scripture says; and this King had no equal in glory and in magnificence. But I love a hundred times better to see this dear little babeling (*enfanton*) in the crib, than to see all kings on their thrones.

But if I see him on the knees of his sacred mother, or in her arms, having his tiny mouth (*bouchette*) like a little rosebud, attached to the lilies of her holy breasts,—O God! I find him more magnificent on this throne, not only than Solomon on his of ivory, but more even than ever this eternal Son of the

Father was in heaven, for if indeed heaven is more glorious in visible being, the holy Virgin has more of invisible virtues and perfections; and a drop of milk which flows virginally from her sacred breasts is worth more than all the affluences of the heavens. May the great St. Joseph impart to us of his consolation, the sovereign mother of her love, and the child deign to pour his merits into our hearts for ever.

I pray you, repose as quietly as you can near this little child: he will not cease loving your well-beloved heart, as it is, without tenderness and without feeling. See you not that he accepts the breath of this great ox, and of this ass, which have no sentiment nor any movement of love whatever; how will he not receive the inspirations of our poor heart, which, though not tenderly at present, still solidly and firmly, sacrifices itself at his feet, to be for ever the faithful servant of his heart, and of that of his holy Mother, and of the great governor of the little King.

My dearest mother, this is the truth, I have quite a special light which makes me see that the unity of our hearts is a work of this grand uniter, and hence I desire for the future not only to love, but to cherish and honour this unity as sacred.

May the joy and consolation of the Son and the Mother, be for ever the gladness of our soul! I come from preaching all clothed by the hand of my loving and amiable mother, and I have been very delighted. Ah! my dearest mother has covered me all over with



*Jesus, Maria.\** May this sweet Jesus and this sacred Mary long preserve her to me, and all the nuptial vestment of our heart! Amen. Your, &c.

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## LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

*On Temptations and Drynesses.—Means to repel them,  
and guard ourselves against them.*

21st November, 1604.

MADAM, MY DEAREST SISTER,—May our glorious and holiest mistress and queen, the Virgin Mary, the feast of whose Presentation we celebrate to-day, present our hearts to her Son, and give us his. Your messenger reached me at the most troublesome and hardest place I can come across during the navigation which I make on the tempestuous sea of this diocese. It is incredible what consolation your letters brought me. I am only in pain as to whether I shall be able to draw from the press of my affairs the leisure required to answer you as soon as I desire, and as well as you expect. I will say in haste what I can, and if anything remains after that, I will write it in a very short time by an acquaintance, who goes to Dijon and returns.

I thank you for the trouble you have taken to detail me the history of your gate of St. Claude, and I pray this blessed saint, witness of the sincerity and

\* Referring to some vestments she had made for him.

integrity of heart with which I cherish you in our Lord and common Master, to impetrate from his goodness the assistance of the Holy Spirit which is necessary to enter properly into the repose of the tabernacle of the Church. It is sufficiently said once for all : yes, God has given me to you, I say singularly, entirely, irrevocably.

I come to your cross, and know not whether God has quite opened my eyes to see all its four ends.

I extremely desire and beg of him, that I may be able to say to you something thoroughly appropriate. It is a certain powerlessness, you tell me, of the faculties or parts of your understanding, which hinders it from taking contentment in the consideration of what is good : and what grieves you the most is, when you wish to form a resolution, you feel not the accustomed solidity, but encounter a certain barrier, which brings you up short, and thence come the torments of temptations against the faith. It is properly described, my dear daughter ; you express yourself well ; I am not sure whether I understand you properly.

You add that yet the will by the grace of God intends nothing but simplicity and stability in the Church, and that you would willingly die for the faith thereof. Oh, God be blessed, my dear child ! *This sickness is not unto death, but that God may be glorified in it.\**

*You have two peoples in the womb of your spirit, as was said to Rebecca : the one fights against the other,*

\* John xi. 4.

*but at last the younger will supplant the elder.\** Self-love never dies till we die ; it has a thousand ways of entrenching itself in our soul, we cannot dislodge it ; it is the eldest-born of our soul, for it is natural, or, at least, co-natural : it has a legion of carabineers with it, of movements, actions, passions ; it is adroit, and knows a thousand subtle turns. On the other side, you have the love of God, which is conceived afterwards, and is second-born ; it also has its movements, inclinations, passions, actions. These two children in one womb fight together like Esau and Jacob ; whence Rebecca cried out : *Was it not better to die than to conceive with such pains ?* From these convulsions follows a certain disgust, which causes you to relish not the best meats. But what imports it whether you relish or relish not, since you cease not to eat well ?

If I had to lose one of my senses, I would choose that it should be the taste, as less necessary even than smell, it seems to me. Believe me, it is only taste which fails you, not sight : you see, but without satisfaction : you chew bread, but as if it were tow, without taste or relish. It seems to you that your resolutions are without force, because they are not gay nor joyous ; but you mistake, for the Apostle St. Paul very often had only that kind.

You do not feel yourself firm, constant, or very resolute. There is something in me, thus say you, which has never been satisfied ; but I cannot say

\* Gen. xxv. 22, 23.

what it is. I should very much like to know it, my dear child, to tell it you; but I hope that some day, hearing you at leisure, I shall learn it. Meanwhile, might it not be a multitude of desires, which obstructs your spirit,—I have been ill with that complaint. The bird fastened to the perch only knows itself to be fastened, and feels the shocks of its detention and restraint, when it wants to fly; and in the same way, before it has its wings, it knows its powerlessness only by the trial of flight.

For a remedy, then, my dear child, since you have not yet your wings for flight, and your own powerlessness puts a bar to your efforts, do not flutter, do not make eager attempts to fly: have patience till you get your wings, like the doves. I greatly fear that you have a little too much ardour for the quarry, that you are over-eager, and multiply desires a little too thickly. You see the beauty of illuminations, the sweetness of resolutions, you seem almost to grasp them, and the vicinity of good excites your appetite for it, and this appetite agitates you, and makes you dart forth, but for nothing; for the master keeps you fastened on the perch, or perhaps you have not your wings as yet; and meanwhile you grow thin by this constant movement of the heart, and continually lessen your strength. You must make trials, but moderate ones, and without agitating yourself, and without putting yourself into heat.

Examine well your practice in this matter; perhaps you will see that you let your spirit cling too much to

the desire of this sovereign sweetness which the sense of firmness, constancy, and resolution brings to the soul. You have firmness, for what else is firmness but to will rather to die than sin, or quit the faith? But you have not the sense of it; for if you had you would have a thousand joys from it. So, then, check yourself, do not excite yourself; you will be all the better, and your wings will thus strengthen themselves more easily.

This eagerness then is a fault in you, and there is a something, I do not know what, which is not satisfied; for it is a fault against resignation. You resign yourself well, but it is with a *but*; for you would much like to have this or that, and you agitate yourself to get it. A simple desire is not contrary to resignation, but a panting of heart, a fluttering of wings, an agitation of will, a multiplying of dartings out,—this, undoubtedly, is a fault against resignation. Courage, my dear sister, since our will is God's, doubtless we ourselves are his. You have all that is needed, but have no sense of it; there is no great loss in that.

Do you know what you must do? You must be pleased not to fly, since you have not yet your wings. You make me think of Moses. That holy man, having arrived on Mount Pisgah, saw all the land of promise before his eyes, the land which for forty years he had aspired after and hoped for, amid the murmurs and seditions of his people, and amid the rigours of the deserts; he saw it and entered it not, but died while looking at it. He had your glass of

water at his lips, and could not drink. O God, what sighs this soul must have fetched! He died there more happy than many did in the land of promise, since God did him the honour of burying him himself. And so, if you had to die without drinking of the water of the Samaritan woman, what would it matter, so that your soul was received to drink eternally in the source and fountain of life? Do not excite yourself to vain desires, and do not even excite yourself about not exciting yourself; go quietly on your way, for it is good.

Know, my dear sister, that I write these things to you with much distraction, and that if you find them confused it is no wonder, for I am so myself; but, thank God, without disquiet. Do you want to know whether I speak the truth, when I say that there is in you a defect of entire resignation? You are quite willing to have a cross, but you want to have the choice; you would have it common, corporal, and of such or such sort. How is this, my well-beloved daughter? Ah! no, I desire that your cross and mine be entirely crosses of Jesus Christ; and as to the imposition of them, and the choice, the good God knows what he does, and why he does it: for our good, no doubt. Our Lord gave to David the choice of the rod with which he would be scourged, and, blessed be God; but I think I would not have chosen: I would have let his Divine Majesty do all. The more a cross is from God the more we should love it.

Well now, my sister, my daughter, my soul (and

this is not too much you well know), tell me, is not God better than man? is not man a true nothing in comparison with God? And yet here is a man, or rather the merest nothing of all nothings, the flower of all misery, who loves no less the confidence you have in him, though you may have lost the sense and taste of it, than if you had all the sentiments in the world; and will not God hold your good will agreeable, though without any feeling? *I am*, said David, *like a bottle in the frost*,\* which is of no use. As many drynesses, as much barrenness as you like, provided we love God.

But, after all, you are not yet in the land in which there is no light, for you have the light sometimes, and God visits you. Is he not good, think you? It seems to me this vicissitude makes you very agreeable to God. Still, I approve your showing to our sweet Saviour, but lovingly and without excitement, your affliction; and, as you say, he at least lets your soul find him; for he is pleased that we should tell him the pain he gives us, and lament to him, provided it be amorously and humbly, and to himself, as little children do, when their mother has whipped them. Meanwhile, there must be a little suffering, with sweetness. I do not think there is any harm in saying to our Lord: *Come into our souls*. This Lord knows whether I have ever been to communion without you since my departure from your town.

No, that has no appearance of evil; God wishes

\* Ps. cxviii. 83.

that I should serve him in suffering dryness, anguish, temptations, like Job, like St. Paul, and not in preaching.

Serve God as he wishes, you will see that one day he will do all you wish, and more than you know how to wish.

The books which you read for half an hour are Granada, Gerson, the Life of Christ, turned into French from the Latin of Ludolph the Carthusian, Mother (St.) Teresa; the *Treatise on Affliction*\* which I have mentioned in a former letter.

Ah! shall we not one day be all together in heaven to bless God eternally? I hope so and rejoice in it.

The promise which you made to our Lord never to refuse anything which might be asked you in his name, could not oblige you except to love him properly; I mean, that you might get to understand it in such a fashion that the practice of it would be vicious, as you might give more than you ought and indiscreetly. This then is understood with the condition of observing true discretion; and in this case, it is no more than to say that you will love God entirely, and will accommodate yourself to live, speak, act and give according to his pleasure.

I keep the books of psalms, and thank you for the music, of which I know nothing at all, though I love it extremely when applied to the praise of our Lord.

Truly, when you want me to hurry, and to find leisure without leisure to write to you, send me this

\* By F. Ribadaneira, S.J.



good man N——, for, to tell the truth, he has urged me so extremely that more could not be, and has not been willing to give me time, not even a day; and I tell you fairly I should not like to be judge in a cause in which he was counsel.

I cannot drop the word *Madam*: for I do not wish to think myself more affectionate than St. John the Evangelist, who still, in the sacred epistle which he wrote to the lady Electa, called her madam, nor wiser than St. Jerome, who calls his devout Eustochium, madam. I desire, however, to forbid you to call me *Monseigneur*, for though it is the custom on this side to call Bishops so, it is not the custom on your side, and I love simplicity.

The Mass of our Lady you may vow for every week, as you desire; but I want it to be only for a year, at the end of which you will vow again, if so be; and begin on the Conception of our Lady, the day of my consecration, on which I made the great and terrific vow to care for souls, and to die for them if needed. I ought to tremble in remembering it. I say the same of the Chaplet, and the *Ave, maris stella*.

I have observed neither order nor measure in answering you; but this bearer has taken away my chance.

I await, with quiet foot, a great tempest (as I wrote to you at the beginning) about my personal revenue. I await it joyously and looking at the Providence of God; I hope it will be for his greater glory and my repose, and many other good ends. I am not sure it

will come, I am only threatened with it. But why do I tell you this? Eh! because I cannot help it: my heart *must* dilate itself with yours in this way; and since in this expectation I have consolation and hope of happiness, why should I not tell it you? But only for yourself, I beg you.

I pray earnestly for our Celse-Bénigne, and all the little troop of girls. I also recommend myself to their prayers. Remember to pray for my Geneva, that God may convert it.

Also remember to behave with a great respect and honour in all that regards the good spiritual father you know of; and again, treating with his disciples and spiritual children, let them acknowledge only true sweetness and humility in you. If you receive some reproaches, keep yourself gentle, humble, patient, and with no word save of true humility: for this is necessary. May God be for ever your heart, your spirit, your repose; and I am, Madam, your very devoted servant in our Lord, &c. To God be honour and glory!— I add, this morning, St. Cecily's Day, that the proverb drawn from our St. Bernard, *hell is full of good intentions*, must not trouble you at all. There are two sorts of good wills. The one says: I would do well, but it gives me trouble, and I will not do it. The other: I wish to do well, but I have not as much power as will; it is this which holds me back. The first fills hell, the second, Paradise. The first only begins to will and desire, but it does not finish willing: its desires have not enough courage, they are only abortions of will:

that is why it fills hell. But the second produces entire and well-formed desires; it is for this that Daniel was called *man of desires*. May our Lord deign to give us the perpetual assistance of his Holy Spirit, my well-beloved daughter and sister!

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LETTER III.

TO THE SAME. (Madame de Chantal.)

*Patience in interior troubles.—Looking at God.—Not to be precipitate in the choice of a state.—Advice on Confession.*

18th February, 1605.

I PRAISE God for the constancy with which you support your tribulations. I still see in it, however, some little disquiet and eagerness, which hinders the final effect of your patience. *In your patience*, said the Son of God, *you shall possess your souls*.<sup>\*</sup> To fully possess our souls is then the effect of patience; and in proportion as patience is perfect, the possession of the soul becomes more entire and excellent. Now, patience is more perfect as it is less mixed with disquiet and eagerness. May God then deign to deliver you from these two troubles, and soon afterwards you will be free altogether.

Good courage, I beseech you, my dear sister; you have only suffered the fatigue of the road three years, and you crave repose; but remember two things: the

\* Luke xxi. 19.

one, that the children of Israel were forty years in the desert before arriving in the country of rest which was promised them, and yet six weeks might easily have sufficed for all this journey; and it was not lawful for them to inquire why God made them take so many turns, and led them by ways so rough, and all those who murmured died before their arrival. The other thing is, that Moses, the greatest friend of God in all that multitude, died on the borders of the land of repose, seeing it with his eyes, and not able to have the enjoyment of it.

O might it please God that we should little regard the course of the way we tread, and have our eyes fixed on him who conducts us, and on the blessed country to which it leads! What should it matter to us whether it is by the deserts or by the meadows we go, if God is with us and we go into Paradise? Trust me, I pray you, *cheat* your trouble all you can; and if you feel it, at least regard it not, for the sight will give you more fear of it, than the feeling will give you pain. Thus are covered the eyes of those who are going to suffer some painful application of the iron. I think you dwell a little too much on the consideration of your trouble.

And as for what you say, that it is a great burden to will and to be unable, I will not say to you that we must will what we can do, but I do say it is a great power before God to be able to will. Go further, I beg you, and think of that great dereliction, which our Master suffered in the Garden of Olives;

and see how this dear Son, having asked consolation from his good Father, and knowing that he willed not to give it him, thinks of it no more, strives after it no more, seeks it no more ; but, as if he had never thought of it, executes valiantly and courageously the work of our redemption.

After you have prayed the Father to console you, if it does not please him to do it, think of it no more, and stiffen your courage to do the work of your salvation on the Cross, as if you were never to descend from it, and as if you would never more see the sky of your life clear and serene. What would you? You must see and speak to God amid the thunders and the whirlwinds ; you must see him in the bush, and amid the thorns ; and to do this, the truth is that we must take off our shoes, and make a great abnegation of our wills and affections. But the Divine goodness has not called you to the state in which you are, without strengthening you for all this. It is for him to perfect his work. True, it is a little long, because the matter requires it ; but patience.

In short, for the honour of God, acquiesce entirely in his will, and by no means believe that you can serve him otherwise ; for he is never well served save when he is served as he wills.

Well, he wants you to serve him without relish, without sentiment, with repugnances and convulsions of spirit. This service gives you no satisfaction, but it contents him : it is not to your pleasure, but it is his pleasure.

Suppose you were never to be delivered from your troubles, what would you do? You would say to God: I am yours; if my miseries are agreeable to you, increase their number and duration. I have confidence in God that you would say this, and think no more of them; at least you would no longer excite yourself. Do the same about them now, and grow familiar with your burden, as if you and it were always to live together: you will find that when you are no longer thinking of deliverance, God will think of it; and when you are no longer disquieted, God will be there.

Enough for this point, till God gives me the opportunity of declaring it to you at leisure; when upon it we will establish the assurance of our joy; this will be when God lets us see one another again in person.

This good soul, whom you and I cherish so much, gets you to ask me if she may wait for the presence of her spiritual father to accuse herself of some point which she did not remember in her general confession, and as far as I see she would strongly desire it. But tell her, I beg you, that this can in no way be: I should betray her soul if I allowed her this abuse. She must at the very first confession she makes, quite at the beginning, accuse herself of this forgotten sin (I say the same if there are many), purely and simply, though she need not repeat any other thing of her general confession; this was quite good, and therefore, in spite of things forgotten, this soul must not trouble herself at all.

And take from her the hurtful fear which may distress her in this matter ; for the truth is, that the first and principal point of Christian simplicity lies in this frankness in accusing ourselves of our sins, when necessary, purely and nakedly, without dread of our confessor's ear which is held ready only to hear sins, not virtues, and sins of all kinds. Let her then bravely and courageously fulfil this duty, with great humility and contempt of self, not fearing to show her misery to him by whose agency God wills to cure her.

But if her ordinary confessor causes her too much shame or fear, she may indeed go elsewhere ; but I would wish in this all simplicity, and I think all she has to say is in fact a very little matter, and it is fear makes it seem great.

But tell her all this with a great charity, and assure her that if in this matter I could condescend to her inclination, I would do it very willingly, according to the service I have vowed for her to most holy Christian liberty.

But if, after this, in the first meeting she may have with her spiritual father, she expects to get some consolation and profit by manifesting to him the same fault, she may do it, though it is not necessary. Indeed, from what I have learnt by her last letter, she desires, and I hope even it will be useful to her, to make a general confession again, with a great preparation ; this, however, she should not begin till a little before her departure, for fear of hampering herself.

Tell her also, I beg you, that I have seen the desire she begins to have of finding herself one day in the place where she can serve God with body and voice. Check her at this beginning; let her know that this desire is of so great consequence, that she ought not either to continue it or allow it to grow, except after she has fully communicated with her spiritual father, and they have listened together to what God will say about it. I fear lest she should commit herself further, and afterwards it might be hard to bring her back to the indifference with which the counsels of God are to be heard. I am willing for her to keep it alive, but not for it to grow; for, trust me, it will always be better to hear our Lord with indifference, and in a spirit of liberty, which cannot be if this desire grows strong; it will subject all the interior faculties, and will tyrannize over the reason in its choice.

I give you a great deal of trouble, making you the messenger of these answers; but since you have kindly taken the trouble to propose to me the questions on her part, your charity will still take it to let her know my opinion.

Courage, I beseech you; let nothing move you. It is still night, but the day approaches; yes, it will not delay. But, meantime, let us put in practice the saying of David: *Lift up your hands to the holy places in the night, and bless the Lord.\** Let us bless

\* Ps. cxxxiii. 2.



him with all our heart, and pray him to be our guide, our bark, and our port.

I do not mean to answer your last letter in detail, save in certain points which seem to me more pressing.

You cannot believe, my dearest child, that temptations against faith and the Church come from God : but whoever told you that God was the author of them ? Much darkness, much powerlessness, much tiring to the perch, much dereliction and depriving of vigour, much disorder of the spiritual stomach, much bitterness in the interior mouth, which makes bitter the sweetest wine in the world—but suggestions of blasphemy, infidelity, disbelief—Ah ! no, they cannot come from our good God : his bosom is too pure to conceive such objects.

Do you know how God acts in this ? He allows the evil maker (*forgeron*) of such wares to come and offer them for sale, in order that by our contempt of them we may testify our affection for Divine things. And for this, my dear sister, my dearest child, are we to become disquieted, are we to change our attitude ? O God, no, no (*nenni*) ! It is the devil who goes all round our soul, raging and fuming, to see if he can find some gate open. He did so with Job, with St. Anthony, with St. Catherine of Sienna, and with an infinity of good souls that I know, and with mine, which is good for nothing, and which I know not. And what ! for all this, my good daughter, must we get troubled ? Let him rage ; keep

all the entrances closely shut : he will tire at last, or if he does not tire, God will make him raise the siege.

Remember what I told you, I think, once before. It is a good sign when he makes so much noise and tempest round about the will ; it is a sign that he is not within. And courage, my dear soul ; I say this word with great feeling and in Jesus Christ ; my dear soul, courage, I say. So long as we can say with resolution, though without feeling, *Vive Jésus !* we must not fear.

And do not tell me that you say it with cowardice, without force or courage, but as if by a violence which you do yourself. O God ! there it is then, the holy violence which bears heaven away. Look, my child, it is a sign that all is taken, that the enemy has gained everything in our fortress, except the keep, which is impregnable, unseizable, and which cannot be ruined except by itself. It is, in fine, that free will, which, quite naked before God, resides in the supreme and most spiritual part of the soul, depends on no other than its God and itself ; and when all the other faculties of the soul are lost and subject to the enemy, it alone remains mistress of itself so as not to consent.

Now do you see souls afflicted because the enemy, occupying all the other faculties, makes in them his clamour and extremest hubbub. Scarcely can one hear what is said and done in this spiritual will. It has indeed a voice more clear and telling than the

inferior will ; but this latter has a voice so harsh and so noisy that it drowns the clearness of the other.

In fine, note this ; while the temptation displeases you there is nothing to fear : for why does it displease you, save because you do not will it ? In a word, these importunate temptations come from the malice of the devil ; but the pain and suffering which we feel come from the mercy of God, against the will of the enemy, draws from his malice holy tribulation, by which he refines the gold which he would put into his treasures. I sum up thus : your temptations are from the devil and from hell, but your pains and afflictions are from God and Paradise : the mothers are from Babylon, but the daughters from Jerusalem. Despise the temptations, embrace the tribulations.

I will tell you, one day, when I have plenty of leisure, what evil it is that causes these obstructions of spirit : it cannot be written in a few words.

Have no fear, I beg you, of giving me trouble ; for I protest that it is an extreme consolation to be pressed to do you any service. Write to me then, and often, and without order, and in the most simple way you can ; I shall always have an extreme contentment in it.

I am going in an hour to the little hamlet where I am to preach, God willing to employ me. Both in suffering and in preaching, be his name for ever blessed !

Nothing of the tempest I spoke of has yet happened, but the clouds are still full, dark, and charged, above my head.

You cannot have too much confidence in me, who am perfectly and irrevocably yours in Jesus Christ, whose dearest graces and benedictions I wish you a thousand and a thousand times a day. Let us live in him and for him. Amen. Your, &c.

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LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

*Great crosses are more meritorious, and require more strength.*

*La Roche, 19th February, 1605.*

MADAM,—I have so much sweetness in my desire for your spiritual good, that nothing I do under this influence can hurt me.

You tell me you still bear your great cross, but that it weighs less heavily because you have more strength. O Saviour of the world! here is one who goes well! We must carry our cross; he who carries the heaviest will do best. May God, then, give us greater crosses, but may it please him to give us greater strength to bear them! So, then, courage: *If thou wilt believe, thou shalt see the glory of God.\**

I do not answer you now, for I cannot; I am only passing rapidly over your letters. I will not send you anything at present about the reception of the most Holy Sacrament; if I can, it will be at the first convenience.

\* John xi. 40.

I saw one day a pious picture ; it was a heart, on which the little Jesus was seated. O God, said I, thus may you sit on the heart of this daughter whom you have given me, and to whom you have given me. It pleased me in this picture that Jesus was seated and resting, for that represented to me a certain stability ; and it pleased me that he was a child, for that is the age of perfect simplicity and sweetness : and communicating on the day on which I knew you were doing the same, I entertained by this desire that blessed guest, in this place (the heart) both in your house and in mine. God be in all and everywhere blessed, and deign to possess our hearts for ever and ever ! Amen. Your, &c.

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## LETTER V.

## TO THE SAME.

*Never to forget the day on which we returned to God.*

*10th July, 1605.*

I HAVE forgotten to say to you, my dear child, that if the prayers of St. John, and St. Francis, and the others you say, have more relish for you in French (than in Latin), I am very pleased that you should recite them so. Remain in peace, my child, with your Spouse clasped tightly in your arms.

Oh! how satisfied is my soul with the exercise of penance we have made these days past, happy days,

and acceptable and memorable ! Job desires that the day of his birth perish,\* and that there never be a remembrance of it ; but, as for me, my child, I wish, on the contrary, that these days, in which God has made you all his own, should live for ever in your soul, and that the remembrance of them should be perpetual. Yes, indeed, my child, they are days whose memory will, without doubt, be eternally agreeable and sweet, provided that our resolutions, taken with so much strength and courage, remain well closed and safe, under the precious seal I have put with my hand.

I wish, my child, that we should celebrate every year their anniversary days, by the addition of some particular exercises to our ordinary ones. I wish that we should call them days of our dedication, since in them you have so entirely dedicated your spirit to God. Let nothing trouble you henceforth, my child ; say with St. Paul : *From henceforth, let no one be troublesome to me, for I bear the marks of Jesus Christ in my body ;*† that is, I am his vowed, consecrated, sacrificed servant.

Keep the enclosure of your monastery, let not your intentions go forth hither and thither ; for this is only a distraction of heart. Keep the rule well, and believe, but believe firmly, that the Son of Madam your Abbess (the Blessed Virgin) will be all yours.

Keep up, as far as ever you can, a close union amongst yourself, Madame du Puits d'Orbe, and

\* Job iii. 3.

† Gal. vi. 17.

Madame Brulart; for I think this will be profitable to them.

You will conclude, since I write to you on every occasion, that I see you often in spirit: it is true. No, it will never be possible for anything to separate me from your soul: the tie is too strong. Death itself will have no power to dissolve it, since it is of a stuff which lasts for ever.

I am much consoled, my dear child, to see you filled with the desire of obedience: it is a desire of incomparable value, and one which will support you in all your trials. Ah! no, my very beloved child, regard not whom but for whom you obey. Your vow is addressed to God, though it regards a man. My God! do not fear that the providence of God may fail you; no, if necessary, he would rather send an angel to conduct you than leave you without guide, since with so much courage and resolution you wish to obey. Repose, then, my dear child, in this paternal Providence, resign yourself entirely to it. Meanwhile, as much as I can, I will spare myself, in order to keep my promise to you, and by help of celestial grace, to be able long to serve you; but may this Divine will be always done! Amen.

Yesterday I went on the lake in a little boat, to visit M. the Archbishop of Vienne; and I was very glad to have nothing (save a two-inch plank) to trust to, except holy Providence; and I was still more glad to be there under the obedience of the boatman. He made us sit and keep still, without moving, as seemed

good to him, and indeed I did not move. But, my child, do not take these words for things of high value. No, they are only little fancies of virtue, which my heart makes to cheer itself, for when it is in good sooth, I am not so brave.

I cannot help writing to you with a great nudity and simplicity of spirit. *A-Dieu* (to God), my dearest child, this same God whom I adore, and who has made me so uniquely and intimately yours, that his name, and that of his holy Mother, may be blessed for ever.

Yesterday, also, I called to mind St. Martha, exposed in a little boat with Magdalen : God was their pilot to land them in our France. *A-Dieu*, again, my dear child : live all-joyous, all-constant in our dear Jesus. Amen.

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## LETTER VI.

### TO THE SAME.

*Not to reason with temptations, nor to fear them, nor even reflect on them.*

*St. Augustine's Day, 30th August, 1605.*

You will have now to hand, I am sure, my child, the three letters which I have written to you, and which you had not yet received when you wrote to me on the 10th August. It remains for me to answer



yours of that date, since by the preceding I have answered all the others.

Your temptations against faith have come back ; and though you do not answer them a single word, they press you. You do not answer them : that is good, my child ; but you think too much of them, you fear them too much, you dread them too much : they would do you no harm without that. You are too sensitive to temptations. You love the faith, and would not have a single thought come to you, contrary to it ; and as soon as ever a single one touches you, you grieve about it and distress yourself. You are too jealous of this purity of faith ; everything seems to spoil it. No, no, my child, let the wind blow, and think not that the rustling (*frifilis*) of the leaves is the clashing (*cliquetis*) of arms.

Lately I was near the bee-hives, and some of the bees flew on to my face : I wanted to raise my hand, and brush them off. No, said a peasant to me, do not be afraid, and do not touch them : they will not sting you at all ; if you touch them they will bite you. I trusted him ; not one bit me. Trust me ; do not fear these temptations, do not touch them, they will not hurt you ; pass on, and do not occupy yourself with them.

I return from that extremity of my diocese which is on the Swiss border, where I have achieved the establishment of thirty-three parishes, in which, eleven years ago, there were only ministers ; and I was there three years quite alone preaching the Catholic faith :

and God has made this voyage an entire consolation to me; for in place of my not finding a hundred Catholics, I have not left there now a hundred Huguenots. I have indeed had trouble in this journey and a terrible embarrassment; and as it was about temporal things and the provision of churches, I have been very much opposed. But God has put a good end to it by his grace, and also there has been some little spiritual fruit in it. I say this because my heart can conceal nothing from yours, and considers itself not to be a different or other heart, but one with yours.

To-day is St. Augustine's; and you may guess whether I have besought for you the mother of the servant (St. Monica). May God be our heart, my child; and I am in him and by his will, all yours. Live joyful, and be generous. God, whom we love, and to whom we are vowed, wishes us to be such. It is he who has given me to you: may he be for ever blessed and praised!

P.S. I was closing this letter, badly done as it is, and here are brought to me two others, one of the 16th, the other of the 20th August, enclosed in a single packet. I see nothing in them save what I have said; you fear temptations too much. There is no harm but that. Be quite convinced that all the temptations of hell cannot stain a soul which does not love them: let them then have their course. The Apostle St. Paul suffers terrible ones, and God does not will to take them from him, and all in love.

Come, come, my child, courage; let the heart be ever with its Jesus; and let this vile beast (*mâtin*) bark at the gate as much as he likes. Live, my dear child, with the sweet Jesus, and your holy abbess, amid the darkness, the nails, the thorns, the spears, the derelictions; and with your mistress (St. Monica), live long in tears without gaining anything: at last, God will raise you up, and will rejoice you, and *will make you see the desire of your heart.*\*

I hope so; and if he does not, still we will not cease serving him; and he will not, on that account, cease to be our God; for the affection we owe him is of an immortal and imperishable nature.

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## LETTER VII.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*He exhorts her to prepare her heart that the Blessed Virgin may be born therein, and to unite herself closely to Jesus.—“The little virtues.”*

13th September, 1605.

MY GOD! dear child, when will the time come that our Lady will be born in our hearts? For my part, I see that I am totally unworthy of it; you will think just the same of yourself. But her Son was born in the stable; so courage then, let us get a place prepared for this holy babeling. She loves only places made low by humility, common by simplicity, but large by

\* Ps. xx. 2.

charity ; she is willingly near the crib, and at the foot of the cross ; she does not mind if she goes into Egypt, far from all comfort, provided she has her dear Son with her.

No, our Lord may wrestle with us and throw us to left or to right ; he may, as with other Jacobs, press us, may give us a hundred twists ; may engage us, first on one side, then on the other ; in short, may do us a thousand hurts : all the same, we will not leave him till he give us his eternal benediction. And, my child, never does our good God leave us save to hold us better ; never does he let go of us save to keep us better, never does he wrestle with us except to give himself up to us and to bless us.

Let us advance, meanwhile, let us advance ; let us make our way through these low valleys of the humble and little virtues ; we shall see in them the roses amid the thorns, charity which shows its beauty among interior and exterior afflictions ; the lilies of purity, the violets of mortification : what shall we see not ? Above all, I love these three little virtues, sweetness of heart, poverty of spirit, and simplicity of life ; and these substantial (*grossiers*) exercises, visiting the sick, serving the poor, comforting the afflicted, and the like : but the whole without eagerness, with a true liberty. No, our arms are not yet long enough to reach the cedars of Lebanon ; let us content ourselves with the hyssop of the valleys.

## LETTER VIII.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*We are to carry Jesus Christ in our soul.*

16th November, 1605.

MY DEAR CHILD,—I find a particular consolation in speaking to you in this dumb language (of letters), after speaking all day to so many others in the language of the tongue. So, then, I needs must tell you what I am doing, for I know almost nothing besides ; and I hardly know properly what I am doing.

I come from prayer, in which asking myself for what cause we are in this world, I have learnt that we are in it only to receive and carry the sweet Jesus, on our tongue by announcing him, in our arms by doing good works, on our shoulders by bearing his yoke, his drynesses and sterilities, and thus in our interior and exterior senses. O how blessed are they that carry him sweetly and constantly !

I have in truth carried him all these days on my tongue, and I have carried him into Egypt, it seems to me, since in the Sacrament of Confession I have heard a great number of penitents, who have, with an extreme confidence, addressed themselves to me, to receive him into their sinful souls. God grant that he may stay there !

I have also in prayer learnt a practice of the presence of God, which, for the moment, I have locked up in a corner of my memory, to communicate it to

you as soon as I have read the treatise which Father Arias has made upon it.

Have a large heart, my dear child, and ever larger under the will of our God. Do you know what I said when spreading your corporal? Thus, said I, may the heart of her who sent it me be spread out, under the sacred influences of our Saviour's will! Courage, my daughter, keep yourself close to your holy Abbess (the Blessed Virgin), and beg her without ceasing that we may live, die, and live again in the love of her dear child. *Vive Jésus*, who has made me all yours, and more so than I can express! May the peace of the sweet Jesus reign in your heart!

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LETTER IX.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

*What the courage of Christians is.*

*January, 1606.*

THIS letter is to my daughter, who is kind, and whose heart I feel to be unchangeable in the holy friendship which she bears me. I have given myself time enough to answer I know, but my leisure has been taken up with embarrassments which our jubilee has brought me. Truly, my dearest daughter, the resolutions which you communicate to me were all as I could have wished you them, and therefore good ones. Keep closely to holy humility and the love of your own abjection.

Know that the heart which loves God must be attached only to the love of God : if this same God wills to give it another love, he may ; if he does not will to give it another, he does as he pleases. I am sure, however, that this good daughter will not keep her heart back. I should be greatly grieved, for I love her, and she would commit a great fault.

Ah! my dear daughter, how falsely do we call courage, what is haughtiness and vanity ! Christians call these cowardice and faint-heartedness : as, on the contrary, they call courage, patience, gentleness, mildness, humility, the acceptance and love of contempt and abjection. For such has been the courage of our Captain, of his Mother, of his Apostles, and of the most valiant soldiers of this heavenly army ; a courage with which they have overcome tyrants, conquered kings, and gained over the whole world to the obedience of the crucified. Be equal-minded, my dearest daughter, towards all these good young persons : salute them, honour them ; do not avoid them, yet neither seek them, except in so far as they seem to wish it. Do not speak about all this unless with an extreme charity. Try to bring that soul which you are going to visit to some sort of excellent resolution. I say excellent, because little resolutions not to do wrong are not sufficient ; we must also do all the good we can, and cut off not only what is wrong, but all that is not of God and for God.

Well, now we shall see one another, please God, before Easter. Live entirely for him who died for us,

and be crucified with him. May he be blessed eternally by you, my dearest daughter, and by me, who am, without end, your, &c.

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LETTER X.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*Means of passing Lent well.*

*Chambéry, 21st February, 1606.*

THIS can only be a short letter, for I am just going into the pulpit, my dearest child. You are now at Dijon, and I wrote thither a few days ago; there you abound, by the grace of God, in many consolations, which I share in spirit. Lent is the autumn of the spiritual life, in which we should gather the fruits, and store them for the whole year. Enrich yourself, I beg you, with those precious treasures which nothing can deprive you of or spoil. Remember what I am accustomed to say: we shall never spend one good Lent, as long as we expect to make two. Let us then make this as the last, and we shall make it well. I know that at Dijon there will be some excellent preacher; holy words are pearls, and pearls of the true Eastern ocean, the abyss of mercy; get together many round your neck, hang plenty from your ears, encircle your arms with them; these ornaments are not forbidden to widows: for they do not make them vain, but humble.



As for me, I am here, where, as yet, I see no more than a slight movement of souls towards true devotion. God will increase it, if he please, for his holy glory. I am going now to tell my audience that their souls are the vineyard of God : the cistern is faith, the tower is hope, and the press holy charity ; the hedge is the law of God which separates from other people who are infidels. To you, my dear child, I say that your good will is your vineyard ; the cistern is the holy inspirations of perfection which God rains down from heaven ; the tower is holy chastity, which, as is said of David's, should be of ivory ; the press is obedience, which produces great merit in the actions it squeezes out ; the hedge is your vows. Oh ! may God preserve this vineyard which he has planted with his hand ! May God make more and more abound the salutary waters of grace in his cistern ! May God be for ever the protector of his tower ! May God will to give all the turns to the press which are necessary for squeezing out good wine, and keep always thick and close that beautiful hedge with which he has environed this vineyard, and may he make the angels its immortal husbandmen.

Adieu, my dear child, the bell urges me ; I am going to the wine-press of the Church, to the holy altar, where distils perpetually the sacred wine of the blood of those delicious and unique grapes which our holy Abbess, as a heavenly vine, has happily brought forth for us. There, and you know I cannot do otherwise, I will present and represent you to the Father, in the

union of his Son, in whom, for whom, and by whom I am solely and entirely your, &c.

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LETTER XI.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*On troubles of spirit.*

7th March, 1608.

AT last I write to you, by Monsieur Fabre, my dear child, and still without full leisure, for I have had to write many letters, and though you are the last to whom I write, I have no fear of forgetting. I was sorry, the other day, to have written you so many things on this trouble of mind which you had. For since it was nothing in real truth, and since when you had communicated it to Father Gentil, it all vanished, I had only to say *Deo Gratias*. But, you see, my soul is liable to outpourings with you, and with all those whom I love. O God! my child, what good your hurts do me! For then I pray with more attention, I put myself before our Lord with more purity of intention, I place myself more wholly in indifference. But, believe me, either I am the most deluded man in the world, or our resolutions are from God and unto his greater glory. No, my child, look not either to left or right; and I do not mean look not at all, but look not so as to occupy yourself, to examine anxiously, to hamper and entangle your spirit in con-

siderations from which you can find no outlet. For if, after so much time, after so many petitions to God, we cannot resolve without difficulty, how can we expect by considerations, some coming without any reflection, others from simple feelings and taste, how can we expect, I say, to decide well? So then, let us leave that alone, let us speak of it no more. Let us speak of a general rule that I want to give you: it is, that in all I say to you, you must not be too particular: all is meant in a large sense (*grosso modo*), for I would not have you constrain your spirit to anything, save to serve God well, and not to abandon, but to love our resolutions. As for me, I so love mine, that whatever I see seems to me insufficient to take away an ounce of the esteem I have of them, even though I see and consider others more excellent and more exalted.

Ah! my dear child, that also is an entanglement which you write to me about by Monsieur de Sauzea. This dreadful din . . . . which makes you afraid of . . . . O God, my child, can you not prostrate yourself before God when it happens to you, and say to him quite simply: Yes, Lord, if you will it, I will it, and if you wish it not, I wish it not: and then pass on to some little exercise or act which may serve as a distraction.

But, my child, what you do is this: when this trifling matter presents itself, your mind is grieved, and does not want to look at it: it fears that this may check it; this fear draws away the strength of your

mind, and leaves the poor thing faint, sad, and trembling; this fear displeases it, and brings forth another fear lest this first fear, and the fright which it gives, be the cause of the evil; and so you entangle yourself. You fear the fear; then you fear the fear of the fear; you are vexed at the vexation, and then you are vexed for being vexed at the vexation. So I have seen many, who, having got angry, are afterwards angry for getting angry: and all this is like to the rings which are made in water, when a stone is thrown in: a little circle is formed, and this forms a greater, and this last another.

What remedy is there, my dear child? After the grace of God, the remedy is not to be so delicate. Look you (here is another pouring-out of my spirit, but there is no help for it), those who cannot suffer the itching of a *ciron*,\* and expect to get rid of it by dint of scratching, flay their hands. Laugh at the greater part of these troubles; do not stop to think about throwing them off; laugh at them; turn away to some action; try to sleep well. Imagine, I mean think, that you are a little St. John, who is going to sleep and rest on the bosom of our Lord, in the arms of his providence.

And courage, my child, we have no intention except for the glory of God; no, no, at least certainly not any known intention; for if we knew it, we would instantly tear it from our heart. And so, what do

\* *Ciron*, a little insect; here, apparently, under the skin of the hand. Cotgrave gives *hand-worm*.

we torment ourselves about? *Vive Jésus!* I think sometimes, my child, that we are full of Jesus: at least we have no deliberate contrary will. It is not in a spirit of arrogance I say this, my child; it is in a spirit of trust and to encourage ourselves. I find it is nine o'clock of the night; I must make my collation, and I must say Office so as to be able to preach at eight to-morrow, but I seem to be unable to tear myself from this paper. And now I must tell you, in addition, this little folly, it is that I preach finely to my liking in this place; I say something, I scarce know what it is, which these good people understand so well that they would willingly almost answer me. Adieu, my child, my dearest child. I am, how truly, your, &c.

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## LETTER XII.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*We must work with courage at our salvation and perfection, whether in consolations or in tribulations.—What abjection is; its difference from humility.—Action which parents should take with regard to the vocation of their children.—Advice on temptations.—God wishes to be loved rather than feared.*

6th August, 1606.

MAY GOD assist me, my dearest daughter, to answer properly your letter of the 9th July. I greatly desire to do so; but I foresee clearly I shall not have leisure

enough to arrange my thoughts; it will be much if I can express them.

You are right, my child, speak with me frankly, *as* with me, that is with a soul which God, of his sovereign authority, has made all yours.

You begin to put your hand to the work a little, you tell me. Ah! my God, what a great consolation for me! Do this always; always put hand to work a little; spin every day some little, either in the day, by the light of interior influences and brightness, or in the night, by the light of the lamp, in helplessness and sterility.

The Wise Man praises the valiant woman because : *Her fingers have taken hold of the spindle.\** I willingly say to you something on this word. Your distaff is the heap of your desires; spin each day a little, draw out your plans into execution and you will certainly do well. But beware of eager haste; for you would twist your thread into knots, and stop your spindle. Let us always be moving; how slowly so-ever we advance, we shall make plenty of way.

Your helplessnesses hurt you much, for, say you, they keep you from entering into yourself and approaching God. This is wrong, without doubt; God leaves them in us for his glory and our great benefit. He wants our misery to be the throne of his mercy, and our powerlessness the seat of his all-power. Where did God place the Divine strength which he gave to Samson but in his hair, the weakest place in

\* Prov. xxxi. 19.

him? Let me no more hear these words from a daughter who would serve her God according to his Divine pleasure, and not according to sensible taste and attraction. *Although he should kill me*, says Job, *yet will I trust in him.*\* No, my child, these helplessnesses do not hinder you from entering into yourself, though they do hinder you from taking complacency in yourself.

We are always wanting this and that; and, though we may have our sweet Jesus on our breast, we are not content; yet this is all we can desire. One thing is necessary for us, which is to be with him.

Tell me, my dear child, you know well that at the birth of our Lord the shepherds heard the angelic and divine hymns of those heavenly spirits,—the Scripture says so; yet it is not said that our Lady and St. Joseph, who were the closest to the child, heard the voice of the angels, or saw that miraculous light; on the contrary, instead of hearing these angels sing they heard the child weep, and saw, by a little light borrowed from some wretched lamp, the eyes of this Divine child all filled with tears, and faint under the rigour of the cold. Well, I ask you, in good sooth, would you not have chosen to be in the stable, dark and filled with the cries of the little baby, rather than to be with the shepherds, thrilling with joy and delight in the sweetness of this heavenly music, and the beauty of this admirable light?

*Lord*, said St. Peter, *it is good for us to be here,*†

\* Job xiii. 15.

† Mat. xvii. 4.

to see the Transfiguration ; and this is the day on which it is celebrated in the Church, the 6th August ; but your Abbess (the Blessed Virgin) is not there, but only on Mount Calvary, where she sees nought but the dead, but nails, thorns, helplessness, darkness, abandonment, and dereliction.

I have said enough, my child, and more than I wished, on a subject already so much discussed between us : no more, I beg you. Love God crucified amid darkness ; stay near him ; say : *It is good for me to be here : let us make here three tabernacles*, one to our Lord, another to our Lady, the other to St. John. Three crosses, and no more ; take your stand by that of the Son, or that of the Mother, your Abbess, or that of the disciple ; everywhere you will be well received with the other daughters of your order, who are there all round about.

Love your abjection. But, you will say, what does this mean, love your abjection ? for my understanding is dark, and powerless for any good. Well, my child, that is just the thing, if you remain humble, tranquil, gentle, confiding amid this darkness and powerlessness ; if you do not grow impatient, do not excite yourself, do not distress yourself, on this account ; but with good heart, I do not say gaily, but I do say sincerely and firmly, embrace this cross, and stay in this darkness, *then* you love your own abjection.

My child, in Latin, abjection is called humility and humility abjection, so that when our Lady says : *Because he hath had regard to the humility of his*



*handmaid*,\* she means, because he hath had regard to my abjection and vileness. Still there is some difference between humility and abjection, in that humility is the acknowledgment of one's abjection. Now the highest point of humility is not only to know one's abjection, but to love it; and it is this to which I have exhorted you.

In order that I may make myself better understood, know that amongst the evils that we suffer, there are evils abject, and evils honourable; many accept the honourable ones, few the abject.

Example: look at that Capuchin, in rags, and starved with cold; everybody honours his torn habit, and has compassion on his suffering; look at a poor artisan, a poor scholar, a poor widow, who is in the same state; they are laughed at, and their poverty is abject.

A religious suffers patiently a rebuke from his superior, everybody calls this mortification and obedience: a gentleman will suffer such for the love of God, it will be called cowardice; here is an abject virtue, suffering despised. One man has a cancer on his arm, another on his face: the one hides it, and only has the evil; the other cannot hide it, and with the evil he has the contempt and abjection. Now, I am saying that we must love not only the evil, but also the abjection.

Further, there are abject virtues and honourable virtues. Ordinarily patience, gentleness, mortifica-

\* Luke i. 48.

tion, simplicity, are, among seculars, abject virtues : to give alms, to be courteous, to be prudent, are honourable virtues.

Of the actions of one same virtue some may be abject, others honourable. To give alms and to pardon injuries, are actions of charity ; the first is honourable, and the other is abject in the eyes of the world.

I am ill among people who make it a burden to them : here is an abjection joined with the evil. Young married ladies of the world, seeing me in the fashion of a true widow, say that I act the *dévoté*, and seeing me laugh, though modestly, they say that I still wish to be sought after ; they cannot believe but that I want more honour and rank than I have, that I do not love my vocation without regret : all these are points of abjection. Here are some of another kind.

We go, my sisters and I, to visit the sick ; my sisters send me off to visit the more miserable ; this is an abjection, according to the world ; they send me to visit the less miserable, this is an abjection, according to God ; for the latter is the less worthy before God, and the other before the world. Now, I will love the one and the other as the occasion comes. Going to the more miserable, I will say it is quite true that I am worthless. Going to the less miserable : it is very right, for I do not desire to make the holier visit.

I commit some folly, it makes me abject, good ; I slip down, and get into a violent passion ; I am

grieved at the offence to God, and very glad that this should show me vile, abject and wretched.

At the same time, my child, take good heed of what I am going to say to you. Although we may love the abjection which follows from the evil, still we must not neglect to remedy the evil. I will do what I can not to have the cancer in the face; but if I have it, I will love the abjection of it. And in matter of sin again, we must keep to this rule. I have committed some fault; I am grieved at it, though I embrace with good heart the abjection which follows therefrom; and if one could be separated from the other, I would dearly cherish the abjection, and would take away the evil and sin.

Again, we must have regard to charity, which requires sometimes that we remove the abjection for the edification of our neighbour; but in that case, we must take it away from the eyes of our neighbour, who would take scandal at it, but not from our own heart, which is edified by it. *I have chosen*, says the prophet, *to be abject in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tents of sinners.\**

In fine, my child, you want to know which are the best abjections. I will tell you that they are those which we have not chosen, and which are less agreeable to us; or, to say better, those to which we have not much inclination; or, to speak out, those of our vocation and profession.

How, for example, would this married woman choose

\* Ps. lxxxiii. 12.

every sort of abjections rather than those of the married state ; this religious obey anybody but her superior ; and I—how I would suffer rather to be domineered over by a superior in religion, than by a father-in-law at home.\*

I say that to each one his own abjection is the best, and our choosing takes from us a great part of our virtues. Who will grant me the grace greatly to love our abjection, my dear child ? Only he, who so loved his that he willed to die to preserve it. I have said enough.

Finding yourself absorbed in the hope and idea of entering religion, you are afraid of having gone against obedience ; yet no, I had not told you to have no hope and no thought of it, but simply not to occupy yourself with it ; for it is a certain thing that there is nothing which so much hinders us from perfecting ourselves in our profession as to aspire to another ; for instead of working in the field where we are, we send our oxen with the plough into our neighbour's field, where, however, we shall not be able to make harvest this year. All this is a loss of time : and it is impossible that keeping our thoughts and our hopes in another place, we should properly strengthen our heart to acquire the virtues required in the place where we are. No, my child, never did Jacob love Lia properly so long as he wanted Rachel. Cherish this maxim, for it is very true.

But, look, I do not say that we may not think and

\* Madame de Chantal lived with her father-in-law, and had much to suffer from his ways and humours.

hope ; but I say that we must not occupy ourselves with it, or employ much of our thoughts therein. We are allowed to look towards the place we want to get to, but on condition we always look straight in front of us. Trust me, the Israelites could never sing in Babylon, because they were thinking of their country ; and for my part, I wish that we should sing everywhere.

But you ask me to tell you whether I do not think that one day you may quit, entirely and for ever, everything of this world for our God ; and you ask me not to hide from you, but to leave you this dear hope. O sweet Jesus ! what shall I say to you, my dear child ? His all-goodness knows that I have very often thought on this subject, and that I have implored his grace in the holy sacrifice and elsewhere, and not only that, but I have employed in it the devotion and the prayers of better people than I am. And what have I learnt up to this ? That one day, my daughter, you are to quit all, that is, (for I want you to understand just what I mean) I have learnt that I am one day to counsel you to quit all. I say all : but whether this shall be to enter religion, is a great matter ; I have not yet arrived at a conclusion on this, I am still in doubt, and see nothing before my eyes which persuades me to desire it. Understand properly, for the love of God : I do not say no, but I say that my spirit has not yet been able to find ground for saying yes. I will beseech our Lord more and more, that he may give me more light on this subject, that

I may be able clearly to see the *yes*, if it is more for his glory, or the *no*, if it is more to his good pleasure.

And let me tell you that in this inquiry I have in such way placed myself in the indifference of my own will to seek the will of God, that never have I done it so perfectly; and still the *yes* has never been able to stay in my heart, so that up to now I could not say it or pronounce it: and the *no*, on the contrary, has always been there with a great deal of steadfastness.

But because this point is of great importance, and there is nothing which urges us, give me yet some leisure and time to pray more, and get prayers for this intention, and further, I must, before forming my resolution, talk to you at leisure; this will be next year, God aiding; and after all this, I would still not wish you, in this point, to take a full resolution on my opinion, unless you have a great tranquillity and interior correspondence in it. I will detail it to you at full length, when the time comes; and if it does not give you interior repose, we will take the advice of some one else, to whom God will perhaps more clearly communicate his good pleasure.

I do not see that it is necessary to hurry, and meantime you can yourself think about it, without making it an occupation, or losing time about it. Although, as I said, up to now the idea (*avis*) of seeing you in religion has not been able to take its place in my mind, yet I am not entirely resolved about it, and if I were quite resolved, still I should not like to oppose or prefer my opinion, either to

your inclinations, if they were strong in this particular subject (for everywhere else I will keep my word to you to conduct you according to my judgment and not according to your desire,) or to the counsel of some spiritual person which we might take.

Remain, my child, quite resigned in the hands of our Lord: give him the rest of your years, and beseech him to employ them in the kind of life that will be most agreeable to him. Do not preoccupy your mind with vain promises of tranquillity, of self-satisfaction, of merit; but present your heart to your spouse, quite empty of all affections except his chaste love; and beg him to fill it purely and simply with the movements, desires and wills which are in his, that your heart, like a mother-pearl, may conceive nothing save the dew of heaven, and not waters of this world; and you will see that God will aid you and that we shall do well both in the choice and in the execution.

As to our little ones, I approve that you should prepare a place for them in monasteries, provided that God prepares in their heart a place for a monastery: that is, I approve that you should have them brought up in monasteries, with the intention of leaving them there, on two conditions; the one, that the monasteries be good and reformed, and make profession of the interior life: the other, that when the time of their profession arrives, which is not before sixteen years, it be faithfully ascertained if they are willing to make it with devotion and good-will; for if they have not an

affection for it, it would be a great sacrilege to enclose them in it.

We see how hard young persons received against their will find it to accommodate themselves and devote themselves to the religious life. They ought to be placed there with gentle and sweet inspirations. If they stay there so, they will be very happy; and their mother also, for having planted them in the gardens of the spouse, who will water them with a hundred thousand heavenly graces. Make then this arrangement for them; I am quite of this opinion.

But as to our Aimée,\* inasmuch as she wishes to stay in the whirlwind and tempest of the world, you must, without doubt, with a care a hundred times greater, make her safe in true virtue and piety; you must furnish her barque much more completely with all the gear required against the wind and the storm; you must plant deeply in her mind the true fear of God, and bring her up in the holiest practices of devotion.

And as for our C. B.,† I am sure that Monseigneur his uncle, will have more care in the education of his little soul than in that of his exterior. If it were another uncle, I would tell you to keep the care of him yourself, that the treasure of innocence may not be lost. And do not fail to instil into his spirit gracious and sweet odours of devotion, and often to

\* The eldest daughter.

† Celse-Bénigne, the son. The uncle is Monseigneur Frémiot, Archbishop of Bourges.



recommend to his uncle the feeding of his soul. God will do with him as he pleases, and to this men must accommodate themselves.

I can say no more to you concerning the apprehension you have of your trouble, nor the fear you have of impatiences in suffering it. Did I not say to you, the first time I spoke to you of your soul, that you applied your consideration too much to any trouble or temptation that may arise; that you must look at it only in a large way; that women, and men also, sometimes, make too much reflection on their troubles; and that this entangles thoughts and fears, and desires, in one another, till the soul finds itself so much embarrassed that it cannot get free from them?

Do you remember M. N., how his soul was entangled and mazed with vain fears at the end of the Lent, and how hurtful it was to him? I beseech you for the honour of God, my child, be not afraid of God, for he does not wish to do you any harm: love him strongly, for he wishes to do you much good. Walk quite simply in the shelter of our resolutions, and reject as cruel temptations the reflections which you make on your troubles.

What can I say to stop this flow of thoughts in your heart? Do not give way to anxiety about healing it, for this anxiety makes it worse. Do not force yourself to conquer your temptations, for these efforts will strengthen them; despise them, do not occupy yourself with them. Represent to your imagination Jesus Christ crucified, in your arms and on your breast,

and say a hundred times, kissing his side ; here is my hope, here is the living fountain of my happiness, this is the heart of my soul, the soul of my heart : never shall anything separate me from his love ; I hold him, and will not let him go, till he has put me in a state of safety. Say to him often : *What have I upon earth, and what do I desire in heaven, but you, O my Jesus? You are the God of my heart and my portion for ever.\** Why do you fear, my child ? Hear our Lord, who cries to Abraham, and to you also : *Fear not, I am thy helper.†* What do you seek upon earth, save God ? and you have him. Remain firm in your resolution. Keep yourself in the barque where I have placed you, and the storm may come ; as Jesus lives you shall not perish : he will sleep ; but in time and place he will awake to restore calm to you. Our St. Peter, says the Scripture, seeing the storm, which was very fierce, was afraid ; and as soon as ever he became afraid, he began to sink and drown, at which he cried : *O Lord, save me.‡* And our Lord took him by the hand, and said to him : *Man of little faith, why didst thou doubt ?* Regard this holy Apostle, he walks dry foot on the waters ; the waves and the wind could not make him sink, but the *fear* of the wind and the waves makes him perish if his master rescue him not.

Fear is a greater evil than the evil itself. O daughter of little faith, what do you fear ? No, fear not ; you walk on the sea, amid the winds and the

\* Ps. lxxii. 25.

† Gen. xv. 1.

‡ Matt. viii. 25.

waves, but it is with Jesus. What is there to fear? But if fear seizes you, cry loudly: *O Lord, save me.* He will give you his hand: clasp it tight, and go joyously on. In short, do not philosophize about your trouble, do not turn in upon yourself, go straight on. No, God could not lose you, so long as you live in your resolution not to lose him. Let the world turn upside down, let everything be in darkness, in smoke, in uproar,—God is with us; and if God dwelleth in darkness, and on the Mount of Sinai, all smoking, and covered with the thunders, with lightnings and noises, shall we not be well near him?

I must tell you a word about myself, for you love me as yourself. We have had these fifteen days a very great jubilee, which will be throughout the world, on the commencement of the Pope's\* administration, and the war of Hungary. This has kept me occupied, though consoled by receiving many general confessions and changes of conscience; then there is the sea of my ordinary occupations, amid which, (I say it to you) I live in full repose of heart, resolved to employ myself henceforth faithfully and earnestly for the glory of my God, first in myself, and then in all that is under my charge. My people begin to love me tenderly, and this consoles me.

All your friends in this part are well, and honour you with quite a special love.

Live, live, my dear child, live all in God, and fear not death, the good Jesus is all ours; let us be

\* Paul V.

entirely his. Our most honoured Lady, our Abbess, has given him to us; let us keep him well; courage, my child. I am entirely yours, and more than yours.

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LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

*Advantage of interior trials for perfection.—God communicates himself in afflictions rather than in consolations.*

*Exaltation of the Cross, September 14th, 1606.*

DO NOT distress yourself about me in all these matters you write of; for, you see, it is with me as it was once with Abraham. *A deep sleep fell upon him in a dark mist, in some fearful place, and a great and darksome horror seized upon him;\** but it was only for a short time, for suddenly he saw a *lamp of fire*, and heard the voice of God promising his benedictions. My spirit certainly lives amid your darknesses and temptations, for it closely accompanies yours; the account of your troubles touches me with compassion; but I clearly see that the end of them will be happy, since our good God is advancing us in his school, in which you are more on the alert than at another time. Only write to me with open heart about your ills and your goods; and put yourself in no anxiety, for my heart is equal to all.

Courage, my dear child, let us keep on, keep on, all

\* Gen. xv. 12, 17.

through these low valleys ; let us live with the cross in our arms, with humility and patience.

What does it matter whether God speaks to us amid thorns or amid flowers. Indeed, I do not remember that he has ever spoken amid flowers, though several times in deserts and thorny bushes. Go on then, my dear child, and make progress during this bad weather and this night. Above all, write very sincerely to me : this is the great command—to speak to me with open heart, for on this depends all the rest. Shut your eyes to any feeling you might have about my peace, which, believe me, I shall never lose through you, as long as I see your heart firm in its desire to serve God, and never, never, please God, shall I see you otherwise ; so give yourself no trouble about that.

Be brave, my dear child, we shall get on, with God's help, and believe me this weather is better for a journey than if the sun were melting us with its burning heats. I saw the bees, the other day, staying quietly in their hives, because the air was foggy : they went out now and then to see how the weather was getting on, but they did not hasten out, occupying themselves with feeding on their honey. O God ! courage : light is not under our control, nor any consolation save what depends on our own will. But so long as this is under the shelter of the holy resolutions we have made, and the grand seal of the heavenly Chancery is on your heart, there is nothing to fear.

I will tell you two words about myself. For some

days I was half-ill. A day's rest has cured me; I have a good heart, thank God, and hope to make it still better, as you wish.

My God! with what consolation do I read the words in which you say that you wish my soul perfection almost more than your own. That is a true spiritual daughter! But let your imagination fly as far as it likes, it will never get as far as my will carries me in wishing you the love of God.

The bearer starts at once; and I must go to make an exhortation to our Penitents-of-the-crucifix. I can say no more except a blessing; I give it you then in the name of Jesus Christ crucified. May his cross be our glory and our consolation, my dear child! May it be lifted up among us, and planted on our head, as it was on that of the first Adam! May it fill our heart and our soul, as it filled the soul of St. Paul, who knew nothing else. Courage, my child, God is for us, Amen. I am all yours, immortally; and God knows it, who has willed it so, and has effected it; with his own sovereign and personal hand.

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#### LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME.

*On the Love of God.*

*Anncy, February 11th, 1607.*

I HAVE been ten entire weeks without having a particle of news of you, my dear, my very dear, child, and

your last letters were at the beginning of November ; but the chief thing is that my fine patience almost disappeared from my heart, and I think would have disappeared altogether, if I had not remembered that I must keep it, in order to preach it to others. But at last, my dearest child, yesterday comes a packet, like a fleet from the Indies, rich in letters and spiritual songs. Oh ! how welcome it was, and how I cherished it ! There was one of the 22nd November, another of 30th December, and the third of the 1st January of this year ; but if all the letters I have written you during this time were in one packet, they would be in far greater number, for as far as possible I have always written, both by Lyons and by Dijon : be this said to discharge my conscience, which would hold itself for ever guilty, did it not respond to the heart of a daughter so uniquely loved. I am going to tell you many things in a desultory fashion, according to the subject of your letters. My God ! how rightly you act by depositing your desire to leave the world in the hands of divine Providence, that it may not uselessly engage your soul, as it indubitably would do if you let it act and move at its fancy. I will think very much about it, and will offer many masses to obtain the light of the Holy Spirit to decide about it properly, for, look you, my dear child, this is a principal affair, and must be tested by the weights of the sanctuary. Let us pray God, let us beg his will to make itself known, let us dispose ours to wish nothing but by his and for his, and let us remain at rest without eagerness or agitation of heart.

At our first meeting, God will, if he please, be merciful to us ; but why then, my dear child, I beg you, should I put off your Saint-Claude journey ? If there are no other inconveniences than those which now appear, I think there is no cause to put it off.

As to the journey I want to make yonder, what trouble to prepare it, and what risk to make it ! But God who sees my intention will arrange it by his goodness, and we will talk of it before the time arrives. And about my little sister also ; she went to Dijon with the good M. de Cressay, who would not too soon confide her to Madam Brulart, for fear she would make her a Carmelite.

I write now that she may be taken to you immediately after Easter ; but write to me whether I shall send to meet you at Montelon or at Dijon, and if you will take this little one to Dijon ; or if I shall have her taken to Dijon, and you take her to Montelon, or how ? Come then for the Thursday before Pentecost, and go to Besançon, by all means, to see the holy Winding Sheet ; all that is quite to my taste ; you will see there Cordelier nuns of the 3rd Order, who are much praised. And perhaps an abbess of another order, who is four leagues from there, namely, at Baume, . . . who is very virtuous, of one of the first families of my diocese, and who loves me singularly. Meantime our little Frances will accompany you, or you will leave her, according to your desire and the counsel of the good Father de Villars. This little Frances I love, because she is your little one and your Frances.



Well now, believe me, my child, I have been thinking for more than three months that I would write and tell you to give up your hoop this Lent. Do so, then, as God inspires it; you will not cease to look gay enough without it in the eyes of your spouse and your abbess.

We must, after the example of our St. Bernard, be quite clean and neat; but not particular or dainty. True simplicity is always good and agreable to God. I see that all the seasons of the year meet in your soul, that sometimes you feel the winter, on the morrow drynesses, distractions, disgust, troubles, and wearinesses, sometimes the dews of May, with the perfume of holy flowrets, sometimes the ardours of desire to please our good God. There remains only autumn, of whose fruit, as you say, you do not see much; still it often happens that in threshing the corn, and pressing the grapes, there is found more than the harvest or vintage promised. You would like all to be spring and summer, but no, my dear child, there must be change in the interior, as in the exterior. It is in heaven that all will be spring as to beauty, autumn as to enjoyment, and summer as to love. There will be no winter, but here winter is wanted for abnegation and a thousand little virtues which are exercised in time of sterility. Let us always walk our little step; if we have a good and resolute affection we can never go otherwise than well. No, my dearest child, it is not needed for exercise of virtues that we should ever keep actually attentive to all. That would

certainly too much entangle and hamper your thoughts and affections. Humility and charity are the mainstays, all the other ropes are attached to them. It needs only to keep ourselves well in these virtues; one the lowest, the other the highest, as the preservation of the whole edifice depends on the foundation and the roof. Keeping the heart closely to the exercise of these, there is no great difficulty in getting the others. These are the mothers of the virtues, which follow them as little chickens their mother hens.

Oh! indeed I greatly approve your being schoolmistress. God will be pleased, for he loves little children, and as I said at catechism the other day to induce our ladies to take care of the girls, the angels of little children love with a special love those who bring up children in the fear of God, and who instil into their tender hearts true devotion, as on the contrary our Lord threatens those who scandalize them with the vengeance of their angels.

See, then, how well we are getting on. If you are not at Dijon for Lent, no matter. You will not cease to be near our good God, to hear him and serve him, in the very service of your father, to whom I owe so much honour and respect for the favour he does me in loving me. I praise God that you were willing to have your lawsuit arranged since my return. I have been so pressed and urged to make appointments that my room has been quite full of clients, who, by the grace of God, mostly returned in peace and repose. I confess that this dissipated my time, but there is no

help for it; we must yield to the necessity of our neighbour.

How consoled am I with the cure of this good person hitherto attached to profane love or false friendship. These are maladies which are like light fevers; they leave after them excellent health. I am now going to speak to our Lord of our affairs at the altar, then I will write the rest. No, you will not go against obedience in not lifting your heart so often to God, and not practising perfectly the counsel I have given you. It is good and fit counsel, but no command. In a command, words are used which make themselves well understood; do you know what counsels require? They require us not to despise them, and to love them. That is quite enough, but they do not lay under any obligation. Courage, my sister, my child, make your heart very fervent this holy Lent. I have charged the bearer, who is M. Davre, my vicar general, to send you this as soon as he arrives, that you may have leisure to send him back your answer, as he will be at Dijon eight whole days.

I have not yet been able to revise the life of our good villager to complete it; but that you may know all I know, I may tell you that when I can get a quarter of an hour of spare time, I am writing an admirable life of a saint\* of whom you have not yet heard tell, and I pray you also not to say a word of it; but it is an affair of time, and one I should not have dared to undertake if some of my most confiden-

\* The Saint doubtless refers to the "Love of God."

tial friends had not urged me to it; you shall see a good piece of it when you come. I shall be able to join that of our good villager to it, in some little corner, for it will be at least twice as large as the great life of Mother (St.) Teresa; but as I say, I want nothing to be known of it until it is quite done, and I am only beginning it. It is to recreate myself, and to twirl, like you, my distaff.

I have received your hymns, which I like much, for though they are not of such good rhyme as many others, they are of good sentiments. And if I am not prevented I will have them sung at my catechism. And in exchange I send you this book, in which you will see many beautiful things, which were in part made from my first sermons by M. the President of this town, a man of rare virtue and a true Christian.

What more shall I tell you? I have just come from giving catechism where we have had a bit of merriment (*débauche*) with our children, making the congregation laugh a little by mocking at balls and masks, for I was in my best humour, and a great audience encouraged me with its applause to play the child with the children. They tell me it suits me well, and I believe it. May God make me a true child in innocence and simplicity; but am I not also a true simple (one) to say that to you? I can't help it, I make you see my heart as it is, and in the variety of its movements, that, as the Apostles say, you may think no more of me than is in me. Live joyful and courageous, my dear child. You must have no doubt

that Jesus Christ is ours ; yes, said once to me a little girl, he is more mine than I am his, and more than I am my own.

I am going to take him for a little while into my arms, this sweet Jesus, to carry him in the procession of the confraternity of the Lord, and I will say to him, the *Nunc Dimittis*, with Simeon ; for of a truth, if he is with me, I care not whither I go. I will speak to him of your heart, and believe me, with all my power, I will beg him to make you his dear, his well-beloved servant. Ah ! my God ! how am I indebted to this Saviour, who so loves us, and how would I, once for all, press and glue him on my breast.

I mean also on yours, as he has willed that we should be so inseparably all in him. Adieu, my most cherished, and truly most dear sister and daughter.

May Jesus ever be in our hearts, may he live and reign there eternally ; may his holy name, and that of his glorious Mother, be ever blessed ! Amen.

I am ever the servant of Monsieur, your father-in-law.

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## LETTER XV.

TO A LADY.

*Sign of good prayer. Advice on this exercise and on the choice of books of piety ; on Paschal Confession and Communion.*

November, 1607.

MADAM, MY VERY DEAR SISTER,—I am surprised you receive so few of my letters. I think I leave none

of yours without some answer. However, God be praised.

Do not torment yourself about your prayer, which you say is without words; for it is good, if it leaves good effects in your heart. Do not force yourself to speak in this divine love; he speaks enough who looks and is seen. Follow, then, the path into which the Holy Ghost draws you, though I do not wish you to give up preparing yourself for meditation, as you used to do at the beginning. This you owe on your side, and you should of yourself take no other way; but when you intend to put yourself in it, if God draws you into another, go with him into it; we must on our side make a preparation according to our measure, and when God carries us higher, to him alone be the glory of it.

You can profitably read the books of Mother (St.) Teresa, and St. Catherine of Sienna, the *Method of serving God*, the *Abridgment of Christian Perfection*, the *Gospel Pearl*, but do not be eager in the practice of all you see there that is beautiful; go quite gently, aspiring after these beautiful teachings, and admiring them very highly, and remember that there is no call for one to eat a feast prepared for many. *Thou hast found honey*, says the wise Man, *eat what is sufficient for thee.*\* The *Method*, *Perfection*, *Pearl*, are books which are very obscure, and go by the mountain tops; we must hardly occupy ourselves with them. Read

\* PROV. xxv. 16.

and read again the *Spiritual Combat*, this should be your dear book, it is clear and entirely practical.

No, my dear child, since you confess to good confessors, have no fear; for if they had not the power to hear you, they would send you away. And so, it is not at all necessary to make in your own parish those general confessions about which you write; it is enough to make your Easter duty there, by confessing, or at least communicating. If you are in the country, the priest whom you find in the parishes can also confess you. Let yourself not be oppressed by scruples, nor by too many desires: go on calmly and courageously. May God ever be your heart, my dear sister, and I am in him your, &c.

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## LETTER XVI.

TO A LADY.

*We must always keep our soul in repose before God.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—As you have told me that my letters always consoled you much, I wish to lose no occasion of letting you have them to testify in some way the desire I have to be useful to your soul,—to your soul, I say, which I cherish extremely.

Keep it always seated and at rest before God during exterior works, and standing up and moving about during interior; as the bees, who do not fly about in their hives or while doing their house-work,

but only when they go out. While we are at our affairs, we must aim at quiet of heart, and at keeping our soul tranquil for prayer; if it wants to fly, let it fly; if to bestir itself, let it do so, though then also tranquillity and simple repose of the soul in seeing God, in willing God, and in relishing God, is very excellent.

When I begin to write to you I do not think what I shall write, but having begun I write what comes to me, provided that it be something of God; for I know that all is agreeable to you; having much strengthened during the last journey the entire confidence which my heart had in yours. I saw clearly, methinks, that you had complete trust in me.

I am writing to that good D. N., who writes to ask me to advise her about her future life; which I find hard, having scarcely seen her spirit, and mine being too common and trivial to consider a singular life like hers: all the same I tell her simply what I think. May God keep you in his holy protection, and load you with his graces.

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## LETTER XVII.

TO A LADY.

*We must bear our own infirmities with patience. God acts in different ways towards his servants. Advice on drynesses in prayer. The will of God.*

MADAM,—Your letter of the 20th January has given me an extreme satisfaction, because in the midst of your



miseries which you describe to me, I remark (I think) some progress and profit which you have made in the spiritual life. I shall be briefer in answering you than I could wish, because I have less leisure, and more hindrance than I expected. I will however say quite enough for this time, awaiting another chance of writing to you at full length.

You say then that you are afflicted because you do not discover yourself to me perfectly enough, as you think; and I say to you that though I do not know what you do in my absence, for I am no prophet, I think all the same, that for the little time I have seen and heard you, it is not possible to know your inclinations and their sources better than I do, and I fancy you have few folds into which I do not penetrate quite easily: and however little you open to me the door of your spirit, I seem to see in quite openly: it is a great advantage for you, since you wish to use me for your salvation.

You complain that many imperfections and defects occur in your life, in opposition to the desire you have of the perfection and purity of love for our God. I answer you that we cannot quit ourselves altogether while we are here below; we must always bear ourselves until God bears us to heaven; and as long as we bear ourselves we shall bear nothing of any worth. So we must have patience, and not expect to be able to cure ourselves in a day of so many bad habits, which we have contracted, by the little care we have had of our spiritual health.

God has cured some suddenly, without leaving any trace of their former maladies, as he did in the case of Magdalen, who in an instant, from a sink of the water of corruption was changed into a spring of the water of perfections, and was never muddied from that moment. But also has this same God left in some of his dear disciples many marks of their bad inclinations, for some time after their conversion, and all for their greater profit; witness the blessed St. Peter, who after his first calling stumbled several times into imperfections, and once fell down altogether, and very miserably, by his denial.

Solomon says that the handmaid who suddenly becomes mistress is a very insolent animal.\* There would be great danger that the soul which had long served its own passions might become proud and vain, if in a moment she became entirely mistress of them. It needs that little by little, and foot by foot, we obtain this dominion, which has cost the saints many decades of years. It needs if you please, to have patience with all the world, but first with yourself.

You do nothing, you say, in prayer. But what would you do, except what you do, which is to present and represent to God your nothingness and your misery?

It is the best harangue beggars make us when they expose to our sight their ulcers and needs.

But sometimes again you do nothing of all this, as you tell me, but remain there like a phantom or a

\* Prov. xxx. 23.

statue. Well, and that is not a little thing. In the palaces of princes and kings, statues are put which are only of use to gratify the prince's eyes; be satisfied then with serving for that purpose, in the presence of God; he will give life to this statue when he likes.

The trees only fructify through the presence of the sun, some sooner, others later, some every year, and others every three years, and not always equally. We are very happy to be able to stay in the presence of God, and let us be satisfied that he will make us bear our fruit, sooner or later, always, or sometimes, according to his good pleasure, to which we must entirely resign ourselves.

The word which you said to me contains wonders: let God put me in what *sauce* he likes provided that I serve him. But take care to masticate it again and again in your spirit; make it melt in your mouth and do not swallow it in a lump. Mother (St.) Teresa, whom you so love (for which I am glad), says somewhere that very often we say such words by habit, and with a slight attention. We think we say them from the bottom of our soul, but it is not so at all, as we discover afterwards in practice.

Well! you say that in whatever sauce God puts you it is all one. Now you know well in what sauce he has put you, in what state and condition; and tell me *is* it all one? You know also that he wants you to satisfy this daily obligation of which you write to me, and yet it is not all one to you. My God! how

subtly self-love insinuates itself into our affections, however devout they seem and appear.

This is the grand truth; we must look at what God wants, and when we know it we must try to do it gaily, or at least courageously; and not only that, but we must love this will of God, and the obligation which comes from it, were it to keep pigs all our life, and to do the most abject things in the world; for in what sauce God puts us it should be all one: it is the bull's-eye of perfection at which we must all aim; and he who gets nearest gets the prize.

But courage, I beseech you; accustom your will little by little to follow that of God, whithersoever it leads you. Make your will very sensitive to the voice of conscience saying: God wills it; and little by little these repugnances which you feel so strongly will grow weaker, and soon will cease altogether. But particularly you ought to struggle to hinder the exterior manifestations of the interior repugnance you have, or at least to make them gentler. Among those who are angry or discontented some show their displeasure only by saying: My God, what is this? And others say words which show more irritation and not only a simple discontent, but a certain pride and spleen; what I mean to say is that we must little by little amend these demonstrations, making them less every day.

As to the desire you have to see your friends very far advanced in the service of God and the desire of Christian perfection, I praise it infinitely, and as you

wish I will add my weak prayers to the supplications you make about it to God. But, madame, I must tell you the truth ; I ever fear in these desires which are not of the essence of our salvation and perfection, that there may mingle some suspicion of self-love and our own will. For instance, I fear that we may so much occupy ourselves in these desires which are not necessary to us, as not to leave room enough in our soul for desires which are more necessary and useful, as of our own humility, resignation, sweetness of heart, and the like : or again that we may have so much ardour in these desires as to make them bring us disquiet and eagerness, or in fine, I fear that we may not submit them so perfectly to the will of God as is expedient.

Such things do I fear in such desires ; whence I pray you to take good care of yourself that you fall not into them, as also to pursue this desire quietly and sweetly, that is, without importuning those whom you want to persuade to this perfection, and even without showing your desire ; for, believe me, this would throw back the affair instead of advancing it. You must then by example and words sow amongst them quite quietly things which may induce them to your design ; and, without making appearance of wishing to instruct or gain them, you must throw little by little holy inspirations and thoughts into their minds. Thus will you gain much more than in any other way, above all if you add prayer.

## LETTER XVIII.

TO A LADY.

*Piety must be solid. We must be faithful to it everywhere and in everything without failing.*

MADAM,—I praise God with all my heart, seeing in your letter the great courage you have to conquer your difficulties in order to be truly and holily devout in your vocation. Do so, and expect from God great blessings; more, without doubt, in one hour of such a devotion, well and justly regulated, than in a hundred days of a devotion, odd, eccentric, melancholy, and springing from your own brain. Keep firm in this course, and let nothing shake you in this resolution.

You have, you tell me, a little relaxed from your exercise in the country. Well! we must stretch the bow again, and recommence with proportionately more care: but another time the country must not cause you this loss; no, for God is there as well as in the town.

You have now my little writing about meditation, practise it in peace and repose. Pardon me, my dear lady, if I cut my letter a little shorter than you would wish; for this good man Rose holds me so by the collar to make me despatch him, that he does not give me leisure to be able to write.

I pray our Lord to give you a singular assistance in his Holy Spirit, that you may serve him with heart and mind according to his good pleasure. Pray to

him for me, for I need it, and never do I forget you in my weak prayers.

If your husband does not hold me for his servant he is very wrong; for I am such very assuredly, and of all who belong to you. God be ever with you and in your heart. Amen.

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## LETTER XIX.

TO A LADY.

*We must labour to perfect ourselves in our state. Advice on  
Confession and Communion.*

MADAM MY DEAR SISTER,—The confidence you have in me gives me continual consolation, and still I am grieved not to be able to correspond so well by letter as I would wish: but our Lord, who loves you, makes up by the great helps you have there.

I approve that in prayer you keep yourself still a little to method, preparing your mind by studying and disposing points, though without further use of the imagination than is necessary to concentrate the mind.

I know well, indeed, that when by good hap we find God, it is good to occupy ourselves in looking at him, and to rest in him; but, my dear daughter, to expect always to find him thus unsought and without preparation, I do not think that this is yet good for us, who are still novices, and who have need rather to

consider the virtues of the Crucifix one after the other and in detail than to admire them wholesale and summarily.

But if, after having applied our spirit to this humble preparation, God still gives us no sweetnesses and savours, then we must keep patiently eating our bread dry, and pay our duty without present reward.

I am consoled to know the chance you have of confessing to the good father Gentil. I know him well by reputation, and know what a good and careful servant he is of our Lord; you will then do well to continue your confessions to him, and to take the good counsels he will give you according to your needs.

I would not wish you, madam, to train your daughter to so frequent communion, unless she is able properly to understand what this frequent communion is. To discern communion from other participations is different from discerning between frequent communion and rare communion. If this little soul fully discerns that to frequent holy communion she must have great purity and fervour, and if she aspires after these and is careful to cultivate them, in that case I consider that she may be let approach often, that is, every fortnight. But if she has ardour only for communion, and not for the mortification of the little imperfections of youth, I think it would suffice to let her confess every week, and communicate once a month. My dear child, I think communion is the great means for attaining



perfection, but it must be received with the desire and the care to take away from the heart all that displeases him whom we wish to lodge there.

Persevere in thoroughly conquering yourself in these small daily contradictions you receive; make the bulk of your desires about this; know that God wishes nothing from you at present but that. Busy not yourself then in doing anything else: do not sow your desires in another's garden, but cultivate well your own. Do not desire not to be what you are, but desire to be very well what you are; occupy your thoughts in making that perfect, and in bearing the crosses, little or great, which you will meet. And, believe me, this is the great truth, and the least understood in spiritual conduct.

*Every one loves according to his taste; few love according to their duty and the taste of our Lord.* What is the use of building castles in Spain, when we have to live in France? It is my old lesson, and you know it well; tell me, my dear child, if you practise it well.

I pray you, regulate your exercises, and have in them a great regard for the inclinations of your head. Laugh at those frivolous attacks whereby your enemy represents to you the world as if you were to return to it; laugh at them, I say, as nonsense; there must be no answer to them, but that of our Saviour: *Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.\** My dear child, we are in the way of the

\* Matt. iv.

saints, let us walk courageously, in spite of the difficulties which are therein.

I think I have satisfied all you want to know from me, who have no stronger desire than to serve you faithfully in this point.

I should much *desire* to see you; but it was not convenient that I should *will* it. God will perhaps dispose some means more proper for this: yes, I pray him, if it is for his glory, for which I will to will all.

May he ever live and reign in our souls! I am, madam, my dearest daughter and sister, your, &c.

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## LETTER XX.

TO ONE OF HIS RELATIVES.

*He wishes her the Love of God.*

MADAM MY DEAR COUSIN,—I cannot, and would not, refrain from writing to you, having so safe a bearer. But it is only to tell you that I ask continually in Holy Mass many graces for your soul, but chiefly and as everything, divine love; for, indeed, it is our all; it is our honey, my dear cousin, within which and by which all the affections and actions of our hearts must be preserved and sweetened.

My God, how happy is the interior kingdom, when this holy love reigns therein! How blest are the

powers of our soul which obey a king so holy and so wise! No, my dear cousin, under his obedience and in this state, he allows not great sins to dwell, nor even any affection for the very least. It is true that he lets the frontiers be approached, in order to practise the interior virtues in war, and to make them valiant; and he allows spies, which are venial sins and imperfections, to run here and there in his kingdom; but it is only to make known that without him we should be a prey to all our enemies.

Let us greatly humble ourselves, my dear cousin, my daughter; let us confess that unless God be cuirass and buckler to us, we shall be instantly pierced and transpierced with all sorts of sins. Therefore let us keep ourselves close to God, by the continuance of our exercises; let this be the main point of our carefulness, and the rest accessories.

Meantime, we must ever have courage, and if some weakness or enfeeblement of spirit occurs, let us run to the foot of the cross, and place ourselves amid those holy odours, those heavenly perfumes, and without doubt we shall be comforted and invigorated by them. I present every day your heart to the eternal Father with that of his Son, our Saviour, in the Holy Mass. He cannot refuse it, on account of that union in virtue of which I make the offer; but I take for granted that you do as much on your side. May we ever, with soul, with heart, and with body, be to him a sacrifice and holocaust of praise. Live joyous and brave, with Jesus on your breast.

Madame, my dearest cousin, I am one whom he has made your, &c.

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## LETTER XXI.

TO THE SAME.

*The Saint exhorts her to be faithful to God.*

MADAM MY VERY DEAR COUSIN,—Rightly do you find God good, and relish his paternal solicitude in your regard, in that, as you are now in a place where you cannot get time to exercise yourself in meditation, he gives himself more frequently to your heart, to strengthen it with his sacred presence. Be faithful to this divine spouse of your soul; and more and more you will see that by a thousand means he will make clear to you his dear love towards you.

I am not then amazed, my dear cousin, if God, giving you the taste of his presence little by little, disgusts you with the world. There is no doubt, my daughter, that nothing makes one think colocynth so bitter as eating honey. When we come to relish divine things, it will be impossible for the earthly again to give us appetite. And *could* we, after having considered the goodness, the stability, the eternity of God, love this miserable vanity of the world? We must indeed support and tolerate this vanity of the world; but we must love and affect only the truth of our good God, and may he be ever blessed for leading us to this holy contempt of earthly follies.

Alas! It is true, madame my dear cousin, the poor Madame de Moiron is dead: we should not have expected it last Lent. And truly we all shall die some future day, we know not which. My God! dear daughter, shall we not be blessed if we die with our gentle Saviour in the midst of our heart? So then, we must always hold fast to this, continuing our exercises, our desires, our resolutions, our protestations. It is a thousand times better to die with our Lord than to live without him.

Let us live gaily in him and for him, and let us not frighten ourselves about death; I do not say let us not fear it at all, but I say let us not disturb ourselves. If the death of our Lord is gracious (*propice*) to us, ours will be good for us. Wherefore let us often think on his: let us greatly cherish his cross and his passion.

You say right, my well beloved daughter,—when we see our friends die, let us mourn them a little, let us regret them a little, with compassion and tenderness, but with tranquillity and patience; and let us profit of their translation to prepare ourselves quickly and joyously for ours.

I have praised God for that this poor deceased had given herself, I think, a little more to devotion this last year; for it is a great sign of the mercy of God on her. It is just a year since she entered into our confraternity, which has well done its duty to her.

## LETTER XXII.

TO ONE OF HIS SISTERS.

*To avoid eagerness in devotion, and to practise mortifications  
which come of themselves.*

20th July, 1607.

MADAM MY DEAREST SISTER,—It is impossible for me to restrain myself from writing to you at all opportunities which present themselves. Do not worry yourself; no, believe me, practise serving our Lord with a gentleness full of strength and zeal: that is the true method of this service. Wish not to do all, but only something, and without doubt you will do much. Practise the mortifications which oftenest present themselves to you; for this is the thing we must do first; after that we will do others. Often kiss in spirit the crosses which our Lord has himself placed on your shoulders. Do not look whether they are of a precious or fragrant wood; they are truer crosses, when they are of vile, abject, worthless wood. It is remarkable that this always comes back to my mind, and that I know only this song. Without doubt, my dear sister, it is the canticle of the Lamb: it is a little sad, but it is harmonious and beautiful. *My father, be it not as I will but as thou wilt.\**

Magdalen seeks our Lord while she has him: she demands him from himself. Wherefore she is not content to see him thus, and seeks him to find him

\* Matt. xxvi. 39.

otherwise: she wanted to see him in his glorious dress, and not in a gardener's vile dress; but still at last she knew it was he, when he said: *Mary*.

Look now, my dear sister, my child, it is our Lord in gardener's dress that you meet here and there every day in the occasions of ordinary mortifications, which present themselves to you. You would like him to offer you other and finer mortifications. O God, the finest are not the best. Do you not think he says *Mary, Mary?* No: before you see him in his glory, he wishes to plant in your garden many flowers, little and lowly, but to his liking: that is why he is dressed so. May our hearts be ever united to his and our wills to his good pleasure. I am, without end and without measure, my dear sister, your, &c.

Have good courage, be not afraid, only let us be God's, for God is ours. Amen.

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### LETTER XXIII.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*It is a great happiness to keep ourselves humble at the foot of the cross.*

*Rumilly, 20th March, 1608.*

MY DEAR CHILD,—Let us keep ourselves, I beseech you, quite at the very bottom of the cross; too happy if some drop of this balm which distils on all sides, fall into our heart, and if we can gather some of these

tiny blades of grass which grow round about. Oh! I should like, my dearest daughter, to entertain you a little with the grandeur of this blessed saint (St. Joseph), whom our soul loves, because he has fostered the love of our heart and the heart of our love,—taking these words: *Lord, do good to the good and upright of heart.\** O true God, I say, how good and right of heart must this saint have been, since our Lord did him so much good, giving him the Mother and the Son? For, having these two pledges, he might cause envy in the angels, and challenge all heaven together to have more good than he; for what is there among the angels to compare with the queen of angels, and in God beyond God?

Good night, my all dear child, I beg this great saint, who has so often fondled our Lord, and so often cradled him, to give you the interior caresses which are required for the advancement of your love towards this Redeemer, and abundance of interior peace, giving you a thousand blessings. *Vive Jésus, Vive Marie*, and also this great St. Joseph who has so cherished our life.

Adieu, my child; the widow of Naim calls me to the funeral of her dear son.† It is not on such a subject that I fail to think on what you write me about your son. God's let us be without end, without reserve, without measure! Jesus be our crown! Mary be our honey! I am, in the name of the Son and of the Mother, your, &c.

\* Ps. cxxiv. 4.

† Alluding to the Gospel for Thursday, fourth week of Lent.



## LETTER XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

*On the repose of our hearts in the Will of God.*

*The Eve of the glorious St. Nicholas, 5th December, 1608.*

MY DEAREST CHILD,—Since my return from the visitation, I have had some symptoms of feverish catarrh. Our doctor would not prescribe me any remedy but rest, and I have obeyed him. You know, my daughter, that this is also the remedy I willingly prescribe—tranquillity, and that I always forbid eagerness. Wherefore, in this corporal rest, I have been thinking of the spiritual rest which our souls should have in the will of God, or which this will brings us; but it is impossible to develop the considerations which this requires without a little quite real and honest leisure.

Let us live, my dear daughter, let us live as long as God pleases in this vale of tears, with a complete submission to his sovereign will. Ah! how indebted are we to his goodness, which has made us desire with such resolution to live and die in his love! Without doubt, we desire it, my child, we are resolved upon it: let us hope further that this great Saviour, *who gives us the will, will give us also the grace to perfect it.*\*

I was thinking the other day of what some authors say about the halcyons—little birds which build on the sea-shore. They make nests quite round, and so compact that the water cannot penetrate them at all; and

\* Phil. ii. 13.

only at the top is a little hole by which they can get air and breathe. Within, they place their little ones, so that if the sea surprise them, they may float in safety on the waves without filling or sinking; and the air which enters by the little hole serves as counterpoise, and so balances these little balls and little boats, that they are never overturned.

O my child! how I wish our hearts to be thus, well compressed, well felted in on all sides; that if the tempests and storms of the world fall on them these may not penetrate them; and they must have an opening only on the side of heaven, to breathe to our Lord! And this nest, for whom should it be made, my dear child? For the little brood of him who makes it for God's love, for divine and heavenly affections.

But whilst the halcyons build their nests, and their little ones are still too tender to support properly the shocks of the waves, ah! God has care of them, and is pitiful to them, hindering the sea from carrying them off and seizing them. O God, my daughter, and so this sovereign mercy will secure the nest of our hearts for his holy love, against all the assaults of the world, or he will save us from being attacked. Ah! how I love these birds which are surrounded by waters and live only on air, who hide themselves in the sea and see only the sky! They swim as fish and sing as birds; and what pleases me more is that the anchor is cast above and not below, to steady them against the waves. O my sister, my daughter! may the sweet Jesus deign to make us such that, surrounded by the world and

the flesh, we may live by the spirit; that amid the vanities of the world we may always live in heaven; that living with men we may praise him with the angels, and that the assurance of our hopes may be always above, and in Paradise!

O my child, my heart was obliged to cast this thought on this paper, throwing its wishes at the feet of the crucifix, that in all and everywhere the holy divine love may be our great love. Alas! but when will it consume us? And when will it consume our life, to make us die to ourselves, and to make us live again to our Saviour? To him alone be for ever honour, glory, and benediction. My God, dear child, what am I writing to you? O my child, since our invariable purpose and resolution tends unceasingly to the love of God, never are the words of the love of God inopportune for us. Adieu, my child; yes, I say my true child in him whose holy love makes me bound, yea consecrated to be, to live, to die, and to rise again for ever yours, and all yours: *Vive Jésus! Vive Jésus, et Notre-Dame!* Amen.

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## LETTER XXV.

TO A LADY.

*We must hate our faults with tranquillity, and not uselessly desire what we cannot have.*

20th January, 1609.

MADAM,—No doubt you would explain yourself much better and more freely by word of mouth than by

writing ; but, while waiting for God to will it, we must use the means which offer themselves. You see, the lethargies, languors, and numbness of the senses cannot be without some sort of sensible sadness, but so long as your will and the substance of your spirit is quite resolved to be all to God, there is nothing to fear : for they are natural imperfections, and rather maladies than sins or spiritual faults. Still you must stir yourself up and excite yourself to courage and spiritual activity as far as possible.

Oh ! this death is terrible, my dear daughter, 'tis very true, but the life which is beyond, and which the mercy of God will give us, is also very desirable indeed ; and so we must by no means fall into distrust. Though we are miserable, we are not nearly so much so as God is merciful to those who want to love him, and who have placed their hopes in him. When the blessed Cardinal Borromeo was on the point of death, he had the image of our dead Saviour brought, in order to sweeten his death by that of his Saviour. It is the best of all remedies against the fear of our death, this thought of him who is our life, and never to think of the one without adding the thought of the other.

My God ! dear daughter, do not examine whether what you do is little or much, good or ill, provided it is not sin, and that in good faith you will to do it for God. As much as you can, do perfectly what you do, but when it is done, think of it no more ; rather think of what is to be done quite simply in the way of God, and do not torment your spirit. We must hate our faults,

but with a tranquil and quiet hate, not with an angry and restless hate ; and so we must have patience when we see them, and draw from them a profit of a holy abasement of ourselves. Without this, my child, your imperfections which you see subtly, trouble you by getting still more subtle, and by this means sustain themselves, as there is nothing which more preserves our weeds than disquietude and eagerness in removing them.

To be dissatisfied and fret about the world, when we must of necessity be in it, is a great temptation. The Providence of God is wiser than we. We fancy that by changing our ships, we shall get on better ; yes, *if we change ourselves*. My God, I am sworn enemy of these useless, dangerous, and bad desires : for though what we desire is good, the desire is bad, because God does not will us this sort of good, but another, in which he wants us to exercise ourselves. God wishes to speak to us in the thorns and the bush, as he did to Moses ; and we want him to speak in the small wind, gentle and fresh, as he did to Elias. May his goodness preserve you, my daughter ; but be constant, courageous, and rejoice that he gives you the will to be all his. I am, in this goodness, very completely your, &c.

## LETTER XXVI.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*The difference between putting and keeping ourselves in the presence of God.*

16th January, 1610.

MY DEAREST CHILD,—Your manner of prayer is good : only be very careful to remain near God in this gentle and quiet attention of heart, and in this sweet slumber in the arms of his holy will ; for all this is agreeable to him.

Avoid violent application of the understanding, because it hurts you, not only in other matters, but even in prayer, and work round about your dear object with your affections quite simply, and as gently as ever you can. It cannot be but that the understanding will make some dartings (*élanements*) to bring itself in ; and you must not busy yourself to keep on your guard against it, for that would form a distraction ; but when you perceive it, be satisfied with returning to the simple act of the will.

To *keep* ourselves in the presence of God, and to *place* ourselves in the presence of God, are, in my opinion, two things : for, to place ourselves there it is necessary to recall our minds from every other object, and to make it attentive to this presence actually, as I say in the book ;\* but after placing ourselves, we keep ourselves there so long as we make, either by under-

\* *Introduction*, ii. 2.

standing or by will, acts towards God, whether by looking at him, or looking at some other thing for love of him; or looking at nothing, but speaking to him; or, neither looking nor speaking, but simply staying where he has put us, like a statue in its niche. And when there is added to this simple *staying* some feeling that we belong all to God, and that he is our all, we must indeed give thanks to his goodness. If a statue which had been placed in a niche in some room could speak, and was asked:—why are you there? it would say:—because the statuary, my master, has put me here. Why don't you move? Because he wants me to remain immovable. What use are you there, what do you gain by being so? It is not for my profit that I am here, it is to serve and obey my master. But you do not see him. No, but he sees me, and takes pleasure in seeing me where he has put me. But would you not like to have movement, to go nearer to him? Certainly not, except when he might command me. Don't you want anything, then? No; for I am where my master has placed me, and his good-pleasure is the unique contentment of my being.

My God! daughter, what a good prayer it is, and good way to keep in the presence of God, to keep ourselves in his will and in his good pleasure! I think that Magdalen was a statue in her niche, when without speaking a word, without moving, and perhaps without looking at him, she listened to what our Lord said, seated at his feet; when he spoke she heard;

when he paused from speaking, she ceased to listen, and still stayed *ever there*.

A little child which is on the bosom of its sleeping mother is truly in its good and desirable place, though it says no word to her nor she to it.

My God ! how glad I am, my child, to speak a little of these things with you ! How happy we are when we will to love our Lord ! Let us, then, love him well, let us not set ourselves to consider too exactly what we do for his love, provided we know that we will to do nothing but for his love. For my part, I think we keep ourselves in the presence of God even while sleeping : for we go to sleep in his sight, by his will, and at his pleasure ; and he puts us there like statues in a niche ; and when we wake we find that he is there near us, he has not moved any more than we : we have then kept in his presence, but with our eyes shut and closed.

Now I am wanted : good night, my dear sister, my child, you will have news of me as often as possible.

Be sure the first word I wrote you was very true, that God had given me to you : the assurance of it becomes every day stronger in my soul. May this great God be for ever our all. I salute my dear little daughter, my sister, and all the household. Keep firm, dear child ; doubt not ; God holds you with his hand, and will never leave you. Glory be to him for ever and ever ! Amen.

*Vive Jésus*, and his most holy mother ! Amen ! and praised be the good father, St. Joseph ! God bless you with a thousand benedictions !



## LETTER XXVII.

TO THE WIFE OF PRESIDENT DE HERCE.

*He consoles her under the motions of the passions which she felt, and which alarmed her.—Nature is not indifferent to sufferings in this life: our Lord in his Passion an example of this.—Remedy for the outbursts of self-love.*

*Anncy, 7th July, 1610.*

MADAME,—God, our Saviour, knows well that among the affections he has placed in my soul, that of cherishing you extremely and honouring you most perfectly, is one of the strongest, and entirely invariable, exempt from change and from forgetfulness. Well, now, this protestation being made very religiously, I will say this little word of liberty and candour, and will begin again to call you by the cordial name of my dearest daughter, since in truth I feel that I am cordially your father by affection.

My dearest daughter, then, I have not written to you; but tell me, I pray, have you written to me since my return into this country? All the same, you have not forgotten me; Oh! certainly, neither have I you; for I say to you with all fidelity and certainty, that what God wants me to be to you that I am, and I quite feel that I shall be such for ever, most constantly and most thoroughly, and I have in this a very singular satisfaction, accompanied with much consolation and profit for my soul.

I was waiting for you to write, not from thinking

you *should*, but not doubting that you *would*, and then I could write more at large. But if you had waited longer, believe me, my very dear daughter, I could have waited no longer ; any more than I can ever leave out your very dear self and all your dear family in the offering which I make daily to God the Father on the altar, where you hold, in the commemoration which I make of the living, a quite special rank ; and indeed you are quite specially dear to me.

Oh ! I see, my dearest child, in your letter, a great reason to bless God for a soul which keeps holy indifference in fact, though not in feelings. My dearest child, all this you tell me of your little faults is nothing. These little surprises of the passions are inevitable in this mortal life. On this account does the holy apostle cry to heaven : *Alas ! miserable man that I am ! I perceive two men in me, the old and the new ; two laws, the law of the flesh, and the law of the spirit ; two operations, nature and grace. Ah ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?\**

My daughter, self-love dies only with our body, we must always feel its open attacks or its secret attempts while we are in this exile. It is enough that we do not consent with a willed, deliberate, fixed, and entertained consent ; and this virtue of indifference is so excellent, that our old man, in the sensible part, and human nature according to its natural faculties, were not capable of it. Even our Lord, who as a child of Adam (though exempt from all sin and all the appear-

\* Rom. vii.

ances thereof,) was, in his sensible part, and his human faculties, by no means indifferent, but desired not to die on the cross; the indifference was all reserved, with its exercise, to the spirit, to the superior portion, to the faculties inflamed by grace, and in general to himself as being the new man.

So then, remain in peace. When we happen to break the laws of indifference in indifferent things, or by the sudden sallies of self-love and our passions, let us prostrate at once, as soon as we can, our heart before God, and say, in a spirit of confidence and humility, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.\** Let us arise in peace and tranquillity, and knot again the thread of our indifference, and then continue our work. We must not break the strings nor throw up the lute when we find a discord; we must bend our ear to find whence the disorder comes, and gently tighten or relax the string as the evil requires.

Be in peace, my dearest child, and write to me in confidence when you think it will be for your consolation. I will answer faithfully and with a particular pleasure, your soul being dear to me, like my own.

We have had these past eight days our good Monseigneur de Belley, who has favoured us with his visit and has given us some most excellent sermons. Guess if we have often spoken of you and yours! But what joy when M. Jantet told me that my dearest little godson was so nice, so gentle, so handsome, and even already in some sense so devout. I assure you, in

\* Ps. vi. 3.

truth, my dearest daughter, that I feel this with an incomparable love, and I recollect the grace and sweet little look with which he received, as with infantine respect, the sonship of our Lord from my hands. If I am heard, he will be a saint, this dear little Francis ; he will be the consolation of his father and mother, and will have so many sacred favours from God, that he will obtain me pardon of my sins, if I live till he can love me actually. In fine, my dearest daughter, I am very perfectly, and without any condition or exception, your, &c.

P.S.—If you fear the loss of your letters on the way, although letters are scarcely ever lost, you may as well not sign your name, for I shall always recognize your hand.

Shall I dare to beg you to give my very humble affections and my service to Madam the Marchioness de Ménélay? She is humble enough to be satisfied with this, and the little Francis good enough to persuade her to it, and Madame de Chenoyse. Also, I must salute Madame de la Haye.

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## LETTER XXVIII.

TO A LADY.

*Human respect is blameworthy in matters of religion. Advice on interior drynesses.*

5th August, 1611.

I HAVE NO SOONER seen your dear husband than I have learnt his departure from this town. This has been

the cause, my dearest daughter, that I have not been able to give him this letter, by which I intend to answer, though in haste as usual, the last letter I have had from you.

Without doubt, my dearest daughter, we must not, another time, alter anything of the general practices by which we profess our holy religion on account of the presence of these troublesome Huguenots, and our good faith must not be ashamed to appear before their affectedness. We must in this walk simply and confidently.

Still your fault is not so great that you need afflict yourself about it after repentance: for it was not committed in a matter of special command, and contains no denial of truth, but simply an indiscreet respect. To speak clearly, there was in it no mortal sin, nor, as I think, venial, but a simple coldness, arising from disturbance and irresolution. Remain then in peace on that score.

My dearest daughter, you ever make too much consideration and examination about the cause of your drynesses: if they came from your faults still you would not have to be disquieted about them, but with a very simple and gentle humility to reject them, and then to put yourself back into the hands of our Lord, that he might make you bear the penalty of them or spare you it, as he might please. You must not be so curious as to want to know whence proceeds the diversity of the states of your life. You must be resigned to all that God ordains.

Well now! here is the dear husband off, my dear daughter, since his position and also his fancy give him the desire of making a show now and then: you must humbly recommend his departure and his return to our Lord, with confidence in his mercy that he will arrange about them unto his greater glory.

Live sweetly, humbly and tranquilly, my dearest daughter, and ever be all to our Lord, whose most holy blessing I wish with all my heart to you and to your little ones, but specially to my dear good little godchild, who is, I am told, all sugar. Your dear cousin is in her vintage, and I am told she is well; so is Madam de N., who I think, advances much with all her sisters, in the love of God. Your, &c.

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LETTER XXIX.

TO ONE OF HIS SISTERS.

*The Saint recommends to her gentleness and peace in the troubles of this life.*

30th June, 1612.

MY DEAREST SISTER,—My child, I am grieved not to have sooner received the salutation which Maître Constantine had brought me from you, for I should have had more leisure to write to you according to my heart, which is full of affection for you, and cherishes you so warmly that it cannot be satisfied with entertaining you for a little time. It is one of

the satisfactions of my life to know that your soul is completely dedicated to the love of God, towards which you aim, advancing little by little in all sorts of pious exercises. But I ever recommend to you, more than all, that of holy sweetness and gentleness in the troubles this life no doubt often causes you. Remain quiet and all loving, with Jesus Christ on your heart. How happy will you be, very dear sister, my child, if you continue to hold the hand of his divine majesty, amid the care and course of your affairs, which will succeed much more after your wish if God help you in them! And the least consolation, which you have from him will be better than the greatest you can have from earth.

Yes, my dear child, my sister, I love you, and more than you could credit: but principally since I have seen in your soul the excellent and honourable desire to will to love our Lord with all fidelity and sincerity. In this I beseech you to persevere constantly, and also in loving me very entirely, since I have a heart quite completely and faithfully, my dearest child, yours, &c.

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LETTER XXX.

TO A LADY.

*Of resignation in trials, and of Christian mildness.*

17th August, 1612.

WELL, what do you want me to say, my dearest daughter, about the return of our miseries, except

that in presence of the enemy we must again take up arms, and courage to fight more strongly than ever? I see no very great things in the letter. But, my God! carefully beware of entering into any sort of distrust: for this heavenly goodness does not let you fall into these faults to abandon you, but to humble you, and to make you hold more tightly and firmly to the hand of mercy.

You please me extremely by continuing your exercises amid the interior drynesses and weakness which have returned upon you. For, since we only want to serve him for the love of himself, and since the service we pay him amid drynesses is more agreeable to him than that we give amid sweetnesses, we ought also to like it better, at least with our superior will; and though according to our taste and self-love, sweetnesses and tendernesses may be nicer, still, drynesses, according to the taste of God and *his* love, are more profitable. So dry meats are better for the dropsical than wet, though they always love the wet better.

For your temporal means, as you have tried to put them right, and could not, you must now use patience and resignation, willingly embracing the cross which has fallen to your share; and as occasions arise you must practise the advice I have given about this.

Remain in peace, my dearest daughter; say often to our Lord that you want to be what he wants you to be, and to suffer what he wants you to suffer. Resist faithfully your impatiences by exercising not only on all occasions, but without occasions, holy



mildness and sweetness towards those who are troublesome to you ; and God will bless your design. Good night, my dearest daughter : God only be your love. I am in him with all my heart, your, &c.

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## LETTER XXXI.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*Resignation to God's Will. Cure for spiritual troubles.*

12th August, 1613.

LET us lift up our hearts, my dearest Mother : let us behold that of God all-loving for us ; let us adore and bless his will, his wishes. Let them sever, let them cut in us, wherever he pleases : for we are his eternally. You will find that in so many bye-ways we shall still make progress, and that our Lord will conduct us by the deserts to the holy land of promise. And from time to time he will give us what will make us prize the deserts more than the fertile lands, in which the corn ripens in its seasons ;—but the *manna* falls not.

My God ! dearest mother, when you wrote to me that you were a poor bee, I thought I could not wish that, so long as your drynesses and afflictions last ; for this little animal which in health is diligent and busy, loses heart and remains idle as soon as it gets ill.

But then I changed my wishes, and said : Ah ! yes, I quite wish that that my mother may be a bee, even while in spiritual trouble : for this little animal has no

other cure for itself in its maladies, than to expose itself to the sun, and to await heat and health from its rays.

O God! my daughter, let us put ourselves thus before our crucified sun, and then say to him: *O lovely sun of hearts, you vivify all by the rays of your goodness: behold us here half-dead before you, and we will not move till your heart quicken us, Lord Jesus.* My dear child, death is life when it happens in presence of God.

Lean your spirit on the stone which was represented by that which Jacob had under his head when he saw the beautiful ladder: it is the very one on which St. John the Evangelist reposed one day by the excess of the charity of his master. Jesus, who is our heart and the heart of our heart, will watch lovingly over you. Rest in peace. May God be for ever in the midst of your heart! May he make it for ever more entirely his own! *Vive Jésus.* Amen, Amen.

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## LETTER XXXII.

### TO A RELIGIOUS.

*Different effects and signs of self-love and true charity.*

1615.

OH! would to God, my dearest child, that it was the treatise of heavenly love which kept me occupied all the morning! It would soon be finished, and I should

be very happy to apply my soul to such sweet consideration : but it is the infinite number of little follies, which the world perforce brings me every day, which causes me trouble and annoyance, and makes my hours useless ; still, so far as I can run away from them I ever keep putting down some little lines in favour of this holy love, which is the bond of our mutual love.

Well, let us come to our letter. Self-love can be mortified in us, but still it never dies ; indeed, from time to time and on different occasions, it produces shoots in us, which show that though cut off it is not rooted out. This is why we have not the consolation that we ought to have when we see others do well ; for what we do not see in ourselves is not so agreeable to us ; and what we do see in ourselves is very sweet to us, because we love ourselves tenderly and amorously. But if we had true charity, which makes us have one same heart and one same soul with our neighbour, we should be perfectly filled with consolation when he did well.

This same self-love makes us willing enough to do things of our own election, but not by the election of another, or by obedience ; we would do it as coming from us, but not as coming from another. It is always we ourselves, who seek our own will, and our own self-love ; on the contrary, if we had the perfection of the love of God, we should prefer to do what was commanded because it comes more from God, and less from us.

As for taking more pleasure in doing hard things

ourselves than in seeing them done by others, this may be through charity, or because secretly self-love fears that others may equal or surpass us. Sometimes we are more distressed to see others ill-treated than ourselves by goodness of disposition ; sometimes because we think ourselves braver than them, and that we should support the trouble better than they, according to the good opinion we have of ourselves.

The proof of this is that ordinarily we would rather have small troubles than let another have them ; but the great we wish more for others than ourselves. Without doubt, my dear child, the repugnance we have to the supposed exaltation of others comes from this, that we have a self-love which tells us we should do even better than they, and that the idea of our good designs promises us wonders from ourselves, and not so much from others.

Besides all this, know, my very dear child, that the things you feel are only the dispositions of the lower part of your soul : for I am sure that the superior part disavows it all. It is the only remedy we have, to disavow the dispositions, invoking obedience, and protesting that we love it, in spite of all repugnance, more than our own election ; praising God for the good which one sees in others, and beseeching him to continue it, and so of other ill-feelings.

We must be in no way surprised to find self-love in us, for it never leaves us. It sleeps sometimes, like a fox, then all of a sudden leaps on the chickens ; wherefore we must constantly keep watch on it, and

patiently and very quietly defend ourselves from it. But if sometimes it wounds us, we are healed by un-saying what it has made us say and disavowing what it has made us do.

Well, I only see casually the lady who was to come to make her general confession, and her eyes are all moist after leaving her daughter : for the great of the world leave one another in parting. Those of God not so ; they are always united together with their Saviour. God bless you, my dear child.

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LETTER XXXIII.\*

TO ONE OF HIS SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS.

*Effects of self-love very different from those of fraternal charity.*

*Early in 1616.*

WHEN will this natural love, which rests on consanguinity, on propriety, on politeness, on similarity, on sympathy, on amiability,—be purified, and reduced to the perfect obedience of the simple pure love of the good pleasure of God? When will this self-love no longer desire exterior presence, testimonies and signs, but will remain fully satisfied with the invariable and immutable assurance that God gives it of his perpetuity. What can presence add to a love which God produces, sustains and preserves? What marks of perseverance

\* This letter corresponds, word by word, with a part of *Conference XII.*

can be required in a unity which God has created? Distance and presence will never add anything to the solidity of a love, which God has himself formed.

When shall we all be steeped in gentleness and sweetness towards our neighbour? When shall we see the souls of our neighbour in the sacred bosom of our Saviour? Ah! he who sees his neighbour outside this, runs the risk of not loving him purely, nor constantly, nor equally; but there, in that place, who would not love him, who would not bear with him? Who would not suffer his imperfections? Who would find him ill-favoured? Who would find him tiresome? Well, my dearest child, this neighbour is really there on the bosom and the breast of this amiable Saviour, and he is there so loved, and so loveable that the lover dies of love for him, a lover whose love is in his death, and death in his love.

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#### LETTER XXXIV.

TO A SUPERIOR OF THE VISITATION, HIS NIECE.

*We must serve God at his pleasure, not our own.*

12th Oct., 1615.

WHAT is the heart of my dearest child doing, which mine loves in truth very perfectly? I feel sure that it is always closely united to that of our Lord, and that it often says to him: *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the*

*protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid.\** My dearest child, *throw your solicitude upon the divine shoulders of the Lord*, and he will bear us and *sustain us.*† If he calls you (and he does) to a sort of service which is according to his pleasure, though not to your taste, you must have not less courage but more, than if your taste agreed with his pleasure; for when there is less of our own in anything it goes so much the better.

You must not, my dear niece, my daughter, allow your spirit to look at itself, or to reflect upon its own strength or its own inclinations: you must fix your eyes on the good pleasure of God and on his Providence.

We must not discuss (*discourir*) when we ought to run (*courir*); nor devise (*deviser*) difficulties, when we should spin them off (*dévider*).

Gird your loins with strength, and fill your heart with courage, and then say: *I will advance; not I but the grace of God in me.*‡ *The grace of God, then, be ever with your spirit.*§ Amen.

\* Ps. xxvi. 1, 2.

† Ps. liv. 23.

‡ 1 Cor. xv, 10.

§ Gal. vi. 18.

## LETTER XXXV.

TO A LADY.

*We should not refrain from speaking of God when it may be useful. It is not being a hypocrite to speak better than we act. Advice for a person in society.*

*Anney, 26th April, 1617.*

I ANSWER your letter of the 14th, my dearest daughter, 1°. Tell that dear B. Marie, who loves me so much, and whom I love even more, to speak freely of God wherever she may think it will be useful, quite indifferent as to what those who hear her may think or say of her. In a word, I have already told her that she must do nothing and say nothing for the sake of being praised, nor omit to say or do anything for fear of being praised. And it is not to be a hypocrite not to do as well as we speak; for, Lord God! where should we be? I should have to be silent for fear of being a hypocrite, since if I spoke of perfection it would follow that I should think myself perfect. No, certainly, my dear child, I do not think myself perfect when I talk of perfection, any more than I think myself an Italian when I talk Italian: but I think I know the language of perfection, having learned it from those with whom I have conversed, who spoke it.

2°. Tell her she may powder her hair, since her intention is right; for the fancies she has about it are not at all to be considered. You must not entangle



your spirit in these cobwebs. The hair of the soul of this daughter is even more scant than that of her head; this is why she embarrasses herself. We must not be so punctilious, nor occupy ourselves with so many reflections; this is not what our Lord wants. Tell her then to walk in good faith, by the middle path of the lovely virtues of simplicity and humility; and not by the extremes of these subtleties of discussion and consideration. Let her boldly powder her head; for even respectable pheasants powder their plumage for fear of insects.\*

3°. She need not lose the sermon, or any good work for want of saying: *make haste*; but let her say it gently and quietly. If she is at table, and the Blessed Sacrament passes, let her accompany it in spirit, if there are other people at table with her; if there is no one, she may accompany it if, without hurry, she can get there in time; and then let her return quietly to take her refectioin; for our Lord did not wish that even Martha should serve him with a troubled eagerness.

4°. I have told her that she may speak strongly and decidedly when required, to keep in order the person she knows of; but I have reminded her that strength is more effective when it is quiet, and is

\* We are unable to express in English the fineness of the irony, the persuasiveness of the hidden argument, or the simplicity of the Saint's language, "*Qu'elle poudre hardîment sa tête; car les faisans gentils poudrent bien leurs pennages, de peur que les poux ne s'y engendrent.*"

allowed to spring from reason, without mixture of passion.

5°. The society of the twelve cannot be bad, for the exercise which it uses is good; but this B. M., who wishes to have no *perhaps*, must suffer it here, and must let us say, that *perhaps* this is a good society; being in no way certified by any prelate, nor by any person worthy of faith, we cannot be assured that it has been properly instituted; the little book which says so, alleges neither author nor witness to prove it. Still, that is good which cannot harm and may profit.

6°. Let her practise prayer, either by points, as we have said, or after her own custom, it matters little: but we distinctly remember telling her just to prepare the points, and to try at the beginning of prayer to relish them; if she relish them it is a sign that at least for that time, God wants her to follow this method. If, however, the sweet customary presence engages her afterwards, let her entertain it; let her also enter into the colloquies which God himself suggests, and which, as she explains them to me in your letter, are good; still she must sometimes also speak to this great *All*, so that our *nothing* may do the part. Well, as you read our books, I will add nothing, save to tell you to go simply, sincerely, frankly, and with the *naïveté* of children, sometimes in the arms of the heavenly Father, sometimes holding his hand.

I am glad that my books have found entrance into your soul, which was so bold as to think that it sufficed

for itself; but they are the books of that father and of that heart whose dear daughter you are, since it has so pleased God, to whom be honour and glory for ever.

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## LETTER XXXVI.

TO A LADY.

*“ We must not be surprised at spiritual coldness, provided we are firm in our resolutions.”—A Servant of God.*

YOUR coldness, my dearest daughter, must not surprise you at all, provided that you do not, on account of it, interrupt the course of your spiritual exercises.

Ah! my dearest child, tell me, was not the sweet Jesus born in the heart of the cold? And why should he not also stay in the cold of the heart I speak of, that cold, of which, I think, you speak; which consists not in any relaxing of our good resolutions, but simply in a certain lassitude and heaviness of spirit which makes us move with difficulty; but still we move in the course in which we have placed ourselves, and from which we will never deviate till we arrive at the port. Is it not so, my child?

I will go, if I can, for your feast, and will give you holy confirmation. Oh! may I share in the spirit of that saint who has called you by his name from your baptism, and who will confirm it in your favour on the very day on which all the church invokes him.

I will tell you on that day one or two of those divine words which impressed our Saviour so deeply in the heart of his disciples. Meanwhile, live all for God; and for his love bear with yourself and all your miseries.

In fine, to be a good servant of God is not to be always consoled, always in sweetness, always without aversion or repugnance to good, for in that case neither St. Paula, nor St. Angela, nor St. Catharine of Sienna would have served God well. To be a servant of God is to be charitable to our neighbour; to have in the superior part of the soul an inviolable resolution to follow the will of God; to have a very humble humility and simplicity in trusting ourselves to Almighty God, and in getting up as often as we fall; to bear with ourselves in our abjections; and quietly to bear with others in their imperfections. For the rest, you know well how my heart cherishes you; it is, my dearest child, more than you could tell. May God be ever our all. I am, in him, all your, &c.

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### LETTER XXXVII.

TO A LADY.

*God does not give good desires without giving the means to accomplish them.*

THE marks which I have seen in your soul of a sincere confidence in mine, and of an ardent affection for piety, make my heart fraternally amorous of yours.

Courage then, my good child, you will see we shall get on ; for this dear and sweet Saviour of our souls has not given us these inflamed desires of serving him, without giving us the chance of doing so ; without doubt he only defers the time for accomplishing your desires in order to choose a more suitable one ; for you see, my dearest daughter, this amorous heart of our Redeemer measures and adapts all the events of this world unto the good of the souls which, without reserve, are willing to serve his divine love.

This good time then which you desire will come on the day which this sovereign providence has named in the secret of his mercy ; and then, with a thousand secret consolations, you will open out your interior before his divine goodness ; and this will convert your rocks into water, your serpent into a rod, and all the thorns of your heart into roses, and into abundant roses, which will recreate your spirit and mine with their sweetness.

For it is true, my daughter, that our faults, which while in our souls are thorns, are changed into roses and perfumes when voluntary accusation drives them out ; because while it is our malice draws them into our hearts, it is the goodness of the Holy Spirit which draws them out.

Since you have strength to rise an hour before Matins, and make mental prayer, I approve it very strongly. What a happiness to be with God while no one knows what passes between God and the heart, except God himself and the heart which adores him.

I approve that you practise yourself in meditation on the life and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the evening, between Vespers and supper, you may retire, for quarter of an hour or a short half-hour, either into your room or the church, and there, in order to rekindle the fire of the morning, either taking up again the same subject or taking Jesus Christ crucified as your subject, you must make a dozen fervent and amorous aspirations to your beloved, always renewing your good resolutions to be all his.

Have good courage ; God undoubtedly calls you to much love and perfection. He will be faithful on his side to help you ; be faithful on yours to follow him and correspond with him. And as for me, my child, be well assured that all my affections are dedicated to your good and the service of your dear soul, which may God will to bless for ever with his great benedictions. I am then, in him, all yours, &c.

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### LÉTTER XXXVIII.

TO A LADY.

*The Saint consoles her on her spiritual dryness.*

CERTAINLY, my dear daughter, it is not that I have not a heart very tender for you ; but I am so harassed by encumbrances that I cannot write when I wish, and, again, your trouble, which is no other thing than dryness and aridity, cannot be remedied by letter. It

is necessary personally to hear your little accidents, and after all, patience and resignation are their only cure: after the winter of these coldnesses the holy summer will arrive, and we shall be consoled.

Alas! my daughter, we are always attached to smoothness, sweetness, and delicious consolations; but the rigour of dryness is more fruitful: and though St. Peter loved Mount Thabor, and avoided Mount Calvary, yet the latter fails not to be more profitable than the other; and the blood shed in the one is better than the brightness shed over the other. Our Lord already treats you as a brave daughter, so be something of one. It is better to eat bread without sugar than sugar without bread.

The disquiet and grief which are caused you by the knowledge of your nothingness, are not desirable; for while the cause of it is good, the effect is not. No, my child, for this knowledge of our nothingness should not trouble us, but soften, humble and abase us; it is self-love which makes us become impatient when we see ourselves vile and abject. So then I conjure you by our common love, who is Jesus Christ, to live quite consoled and quite tranquil in your infirmities. *I will glory in my infirmities*, says our great St. Paul, *that the strength of my Saviour may dwell in me*;\* yes, for our misery serves as a throne for the sovereign goodness of our Lord.

I wish you a thousand blessings. O Lord, bless the heart of my dearest child, and make it burn as a

\* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

holocaust of sweetness unto the honour of your love !  
 May she seek no other contentment than yours, nor  
 require other consolation than to be perfectly con-  
 secrated to your glory ! May Jesus be for ever in the  
 midst of this heart, and this heart for ever in the  
 midst of Jesus ! May Jesus live in this heart, and  
 this heart in Jesus !

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### LETTER XXXIX.

TO A LADY.

*The will of God gives a great value to the least actions. We must  
 love nothing too ardently, even virtues.*

MADAM, MY DEAREST SISTER,—You see me in readiness  
 to write to you, and I know not what, except to tell you  
 to walk always gaily in this all-heavenly way in which  
 God has placed you. I will bless him all my life for  
 the graces he has prepared you ; prepare him, on your  
 side, as an acknowledgment, great resignations, and  
 courageously lead your heart to the execution of the  
 things you know he wants from you, in spite of all  
 kinds of contradictions which might oppose themselves  
 to this.

Regard not at all the substance of the things you do,  
 but the honour they have, however trifling they may  
 be, to be willed by God, to be in the order of his  
 providence, and disposed by his wisdom ; in a word,  
 being agreeable to God, and recognised as such, to  
 whom can they be disagreeable ?



Be attentive, my dearest child, to make yourself every day more pure of heart. This purity consists in estimating and weighing all things in the balance of the sanctuary, which is nothing else but the will of God.

Love nothing too much, not even virtues, which are lost sometimes by passing the bounds of moderation. I do not know whether you understand me, but I think so: I refer to your desires, your ardours.

It is not the property of roses to be white, I think; for the red are lovelier and of sweeter smell; but it is the property of lilies.

Let us be what we are, and let us be it *well*, to do honour to the Master whose work we are. People laughed at the painter, who wishing to represent a horse, painted a perfect bull; the work was fine in itself, but of little credit to the workman, who had another design, and had done well by chance.

Let us be what God likes, so long as we are his, and let us not be what we want to be, if against his intention; for if we were the most excellent creatures under heaven, what would it profit us if we were not according to the pleasure of God's will?

Perhaps I repeat this too much; but I will not say it so often again, as our Lord has already strengthened you much in this point.

Do me this pleasure, to let me know the subject of your meditations for the present year. I shall be charmed to know it, and also the fruit they produce in you. Rejoice in our Lord, my dear sister, and

keep your heart in peace. I salute your husband, and am for ever, Madam, &c.

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### LETTER XL.

TO MADEMOISELLE DE TRAVES.

*The Saint removes two scruples which she had.*

4th July, 1620.

IT is the truth that not only are you my very dear daughter, but it is the truth that every day you are more so in my love. And, God be praised because he has not only created in my heart an affection for you really more than paternal, but also because he has placed in your heart the assurance you ought to have of this. And, indeed, my dearest daughter, when in writing to me you say sometimes, your dearest daughter loves you, and when you speak to me in that quality, I confess that I receive an excellent satisfaction from it. Believe it, and say truly, I pray you, that you are assuredly my dearest child, and never doubt it. What you said to save a little temporal good was not a lie, but only an inadvertence, so that at most there could only be a venial sin, and as you describe the case to me, there would even seem to be no sin at all, as there was no question of injustice to your neighbour.\*

\* The Saint does not say that a lie would be no sin if it did no harm to our neighbour, but that we might plead inadvertence with more probability, when there was no question of serious consequences.—(*Translator's Note.*)

Make no scruple, either little or great, in communicating before holy Mass, above all where there is so good a cause as you mention; but even if there were not, still there would not be the merest shadow of sin.

And keep your soul always in your hands, my dearest daughter, to preserve it well for him who having ransomed it for you alone deserves to possess it. May he be for ever blessed! Amen. Truly I am very faithfully yours in him, and the very humble servant of yourself, and of your dear sister, and of all your house.

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LETTER XLI.

TO A LADY.

*Merit of the services which we pay God in desolations  
and drynesses.*

20th September, 1621.

It has been a very sweet consolation to have news of your soul, my dearest daughter; of your soul, I say, which in all truth mine cherishes very singularly.

The trouble you have to put yourself in prayer will not lessen the value of it before God, who prefers the services we pay him amid interior or exterior contradictions to those we give him amid sweetnesses; since he himself, to make us agreeable to his Eternal Father, has reconciled us to his Majesty in his blood, in his labours, in his death.

And be not astonished if you do not yet see in yourself much progress, either in your spiritual or your temporal affairs: all trees, my dearest daughter, do not produce their fruit in the same season; yea, those which have the best are also longest in bringing them forth, and the palm-tree, it is said, takes one hundred years.

God has hidden in the secret of his Providence the mark of the time when he means to hear you, and the way in which he will hear you; and perhaps he will hear you excellently, not according to your thoughts, but his own. So repose in peace, my dearest daughter, in the paternal arms of the most loving care which the sovereign Heavenly Father has and will have of you, since you are his, and no longer your own.

For in this I have my chiefest sweetness, in remembering the day in which, prostrate at the feet of his mercy, after your confession, you dedicated to him your person and your life, to remain, in everything and everywhere, humbly and filially submissive to his most holy will. So be it, my dearest daughter; I am universally your, &c.

P.S.—O my God, dearest child, how many different ways has this eternal Providence of gratifying his own! Oh! what a great favour is it when he preserves and keeps his gratifications for eternal life! I have said this word to finish and fill up the page. May God ever be our all. Amen.

## LETTER XLII.

TO A RELIGIOUS OF THE VISITATION.

*Answers to questions on the truths of Faith.*

28th November, 1621.

THE truths of the faith, my dearest child, are sometimes agreeable to the human spirit, not only because God has revealed them by his word, and proposed them by his Church, but also because they suit our taste, and because we enter into them thoroughly, we understand them easily, and they are according to our inclinations. As, for example, that there is a Paradise after this mortal life,—this is a truth of faith which many hold much to their satisfaction, because it is sweet and desirable. That God is merciful the greatest part of the world finds to be a very good thing, and easily believes, because even philosophy teaches us this; it is conformable to our taste and to our desire.

Now, all the truths of faith are not of this kind; as, for example, that there is an eternal hell for the punishment of the wicked,—this is a truth of faith, but a bitter, terrifying, fearful truth, and one which we do not believe willingly, except by the force of God's word.

And now I say, firstly, that naked and simple faith is that by which we believe the truths of faith, without considering any pleasure, sweetness, or consolation, we may have in them, but solely by the acquiescence of our spirit in the authority of the word of God, and

the proposition of the Church : and thus we believe no less the terrifying truths than the sweet and agreeable truths : and then our faith is naked, because it is not clothed with any sweetness or any relish ; it is simple, because it is not mingled with any satisfaction of our own feelings.

Secondly, there are truths of faith which we can apprehend by the imagination ; as that our Lord was born in the manger of Bethlehem, that he was carried into Egypt, that he was crucified, that he went up to heaven. There are others, which we cannot at all grasp with the imagination, as the truth of the Most Holy Trinity, Eternity, the presence of our Lord's body in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist : for all these truths are true in a way which is inconceivable to our imagination, since we cannot imagine *how* these things can be. Still, our understanding believes them firmly and simply, on the sole assurance it has of the word of God : and this faith is truly naked, for it is divested of all imagination ; and it is entirely simple, because it has no sort of action except the action of our understanding, which purely and simply embraces these truths on the sole security of God's word. This faith, thus naked and simple, is that which the saints have practised and do practise amid sterilities, drynesses, distrusts, and darknesses.

To live in truth, and not in untruth, is to lead a life entirely conformed to naked and simple faith, according to the operations of grace and not of nature ; because our imagination, our senses, our feeling, our

taste, our consolations, our arguments, may be deceived and may err; and to live according to them is to live in untruth, or at least in a perpetual risk of untruth; but to live in naked and simple faith,—this is to live in truth.

So it is said of the wicked spirit, that *he abode not in the truth*,\* because having had faith in the beginning of his creation, he quitted it, wishing to argue, without the faith, about his own excellence, and wishing to make himself his end, not according to naked and simple faith, but according to natural conditions, which carried him on to an extravagant and irregular love of himself. This is the lie in which live all those who do not adhere with simplicity and nudity of faith to the word of God, but wish to live according to human prudence, which is no other than an ants' nest of lies and vain arguments.

This is what I think good to say to you on your two questions.

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### LETTER XLIII.

TO A LADY.

*Of piety in the midst of afflictions.*

*Ancey, 28th April, 1622.*

MAY it please the Holy Spirit to inspire me with what I have to write to you, Madam, and, if you please,

\* John viii. 44.

dearest daughter. To live constantly in devotion there is only need to establish in our mind strong and excellent maxims.

The first to establish in yours is that of St. Paul. *To them that love God, all things work together unto good.*\* And in truth, since God can and does draw good from evil, for whom will he do so if not for those who, without reserve, have given themselves to him? Yes, even sins (from which God by his goodness defend us!) are overruled by Divine Providence, unto the good of those who are his. Never would David have been so crowned with humility if he had not sinned, nor Magdalen so amorous of her Saviour if he had not forgiven her so many sins, and he would not have forgiven them, if she had not committed them.

Behold, my dear daughter, this great craftsman (*artisan*) of mercy; he alters our miseries into graces, and makes the salutary *thériacum*† of our souls from the viper of our iniquities. Tell me, then, what will he not do with our afflictions, with our labours, with the persecutions used against us? If then it ever happens that any pain touches you, from any quarter whatever, assure your soul that if it truly loves God, all will turn unto good. And though this "good" works by springs which you do not see, remain all the more assured that it will come. If God puts the clay of ignominy on your eyes, it is to give you excellent

\* Rom. viii. 28.

† A medicine in which one of the ingredients was the head of the viper. It was used against poisons.



sight, and to make you a spectacle of honour. If God lets you fall down, like St. Paul, whom he struck to the earth, it is to lift you up into glory.

The second maxim is, that he is your Father: for otherwise, he would not order you to say: *Our Father, who art in heaven.* And what have you to fear, who are daughter of such a father, without whose providence not a single hair of your head shall perish. It is a marvel that being child of such a father, we have or can have other care than to love and serve him well. Take the pains he would have you take about your person and your family, and no more; for you will see that he will have care of you. Think in me, he said to St. Catharine of Sienna (whose feast we keep to day) and I will think in thee. *O, Eternal Father!* says the wise Man, *your providence governs all.*\*

The third maxim you must have is that which our Lord taught to his Apostles. *Did you want anything?* † Look, my dear daughter; our Lord had sent his Apostles up and down, without money, without staff, without shoes, without scrip, with but one coat,—and afterwards he said to them, *When I sent you so, did you want anything? But they said: nothing.* And now, my child, when you have had afflictions, even in the time when you had not so much confidence in God, did you perish in the affliction? You will tell me: no. And why then will you not have courage to come safely out of all other adversities? God has not abandoned you up to now, will he

\* Wisdom xiv. 3.

† Luke xxii. 35.

abandon you from this time, when more than formerly you would be his? Fear not future evils of this world, for perhaps they will never happen; and in any case, if they do happen, God will strengthen you. He ordered St. Peter to walk on the waters, and St. Peter, seeing the wind and the storm, was afraid, and the fear made him sink, and he begged help from his master, who said to him: *Man of little faith, why didst thou doubt?\** And giving his hand he reassured him. If God makes you walk on the waves of adversity, doubt not, my child; fear not, God is with you; have good courage, and you shall be delivered.

The fourth maxim is *eternity*. Little matters it what I am in these passing moments, if I am eternally in the glory of my God. My child, we move towards eternity, we have almost already one of our feet therein; if our eternity be happy, what matters it that these transitory moments be burdensome? Is it possible for us to know that our tribulations of three or four days work such a weight of eternal consolations, and to be unwilling to bear them? In fine, my dearest daughter,

What is not for eternity,  
Can nothing be but vanity.

The fifth maxim is that of the Apostle: *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.†* Plant in your heart Jesus Christ crucified, and all the crosses of this world will seem roses to

\* Mat. xiv. 31.

† Gal. vi. 14.

you. Those who are pricked with the thorns of the crown of our Lord who is our head, scarcely feel other thorns.

You will find all I have said to you in the 3rd, 4th (or 5th), and last books of the *Love of God*. You will find many things about it in the *Sinners' Guide* (the large one) of Granada. I must conclude, for I am pressed for time. Write to me with confidence, and point out to me what you think I can do for your heart, and mine will give it very affectionately; for I am, in all truth, Madame, your, &c.

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#### LETTER XLIV.

TO A LADY.

*Purity of Christian friendships: God is their bond.—The world is insipid to those who love God.—Humility must supply the want of courage.*

MY GOD, dearest daughter, how I love your heart since it wishes to love nothing but its Jesus and for its Jesus! Alas! could it possibly be that a soul which considers this Jesus crucified for her, should love anything outside him? Could it be that after so many true movements of fidelity, which have so often made us say, write, sing, breathe and sigh, *Vive Jésus!* we should will, like Jews, to cry out: *Let him be crucified*, let him be killed in our hearts? O God! my child, I say very true child, how strong shall we be if we continue to keep ourselves united to one

another by this cord dyed in the crimson blood of our Saviour! For no one will attack your heart without finding resistance from you, and from my heart, which is quite dedicated to yours.

I have seen it, this wretched letter. *The wicked*, says David, *have told me their fables, but not as your law.*\* O God! how insipid is this compared with the sacred divine love which lives in our hearts!

You are right; as once for all you have declared the invariable resolutions of your soul, and he pretends not to be willing to acknowledge them, do not answer a single word until he speaks otherwise; for he does not understand the language of the cross, nor we that of hell.

You do well also to receive these few words I say to you with tenderness of love: for the affection I have for you is greater and stronger than you would ever think.

You are glad that the troublesome girl has left you: a soldier must have gained much in the war, when he is very glad of peace. We shall never have perfect sweetness and charity, if they are not practised amid repugnances, aversions, and disgusts. True peace does not lie in not fighting but in conquering: the conquered fight no longer, yet they have not true peace. Well, we must greatly humble ourselves for being still so little masters of ourselves, and so much lovers of ease and rest.

The child who is about to be born for us is not come to rest himself, nor to have his conveniences,

\* Ps. cxviii. 85.

either spiritual or temporal, but to fight, to mortify himself, and to die. So, then, henceforward, since we have not courage, let us at least have humility.

I will see you soon ; keep quite ready on the tip of your tongue what you will have to say to me, so that, however little leisure we have, you may be able to pour it out into my soul : meantime, press closely this divine baby to your heart, that you may, with that soul, inebriated with heavenly love, breathe forth these sacred words of love: *My beloved to me, and I to him. He shall abide between my breasts.\**

So, my dearest daughter, may this divine love of our hearts be for ever on our breast, to inflame and consume us by his grace ! Amen.

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## LETTER XLV.

TO ONE OF HIS SISTERS.

*The Saint exhorts her to live in a great conformity with our Lord.*

MY DEAREST SISTER,—I am writing just to wish you good-night, and to keep you in assurance that I do not cease wishing a thousand thousand heavenly blessings to you, and to my brother ; but particularly that of being ever transfigured in our Lord. Oh ! how lovely is his face, and his eyes, how mild and wondrous in sweetness, and how good is it to be with him on the mount of glory ! It is there, my dear

\* Cant. i. 12.

sister, my child, that we ought to lodge our desires and our affections, not on this earth, where there are but vain beauties and beautiful vanities. Well, now, thanks to this Saviour, we are on the slope of Mount Thabor, as we have firm resolutions to serve and love fully his divine goodness; we must then encourage ourselves to a holy hope. Let us ascend ever, my dearest sister, let us ascend without growing tired to this heavenly vision of the Saviour; let us withdraw ourselves, little by little, from earthly and base affections, and aspire after the happiness which is prepared for us.

I conjure you, my dear child, to beseech our Lord earnestly for me, that he would keep me henceforth in the paths of his will, that I may serve him in sincerity and fidelity. Look, my dear child, I desire either to die or to love God, either death or love: for life that is without this love, is infinitely worse than death. My God! dearest child, how happy shall we be, if we love well this sovereign goodness, which prepares us so many favours and benedictions.

Let us belong entirely to it, my dearest child, amid the many trials which the diversity of worldly things causes us. How would we better testify our fidelity than amid contrarieties! Ah! my dearest child, my sister, solitude has its dangers, the world has its snares, but everywhere we must have good courage, since everywhere the help of heaven is ready for those who have confidence in God, and who, with humility and sweetness, implore his paternal assistance.

Be on your guard not to let your carefulness turn to solicitude and anxiety; and though you are tossed on the waves and amid the winds of many troubles, always look up to heaven, and say to our Lord: O God, it is for you I voyage and sail: be my guide, and my pilot. Then comfort yourself in this, that when we are in port, the delights we shall have there will outbalance the labours endured in getting there. But we are on our way there, amid all these storms, if we have a right heart, good intention, firm courage, our eyes on God, and in him all our trust.

And if the violence of the tempest sometimes disturbs our stomach, and makes our head swim a little, let us not be surprised; but, as soon as ever we can, let us take breath again, and encourage ourselves to do better. You continue to walk in our good resolutions, I am sure. Be not troubled, then, at these little attacks of disquiet and annoyance which the multiplicity of domestic affairs causes you; no, my dearest child, for this serves as an exercise to practise those most dear and lovely virtues which our Lord has recommended us. Believe me, true virtue does not thrive in exterior repose, any more than good fish in the stagnant waters of a marsh. *Vive Jésus!*

## LETTER XLVI.

TO THE SAME.

*The Saint exhorts her to communicate often, and to abandon herself to Providence in contradiction.*

MAY our Lord take away your heart as he did that of the devout St. Catharine of Sienna (whose feast we keep to-day), to give you his own most divine, so that you may live solely by his holy love. What a happiness, my dearest sister, if some day, in coming from Holy Communion, I found my weak and miserable heart out of my breast, and established in its stead the precious heart of my God! But, my dearest child, since we ought not to desire things so extraordinary, at least will I that our poor hearts should henceforward live only under the obedience and commandments of the Lord: this will be quite enough, my dear sister, to imitate profitably in this point St. Catharine; and then we shall be gentle, humble and charitable, since the heart of our Saviour has no laws more dear to it than those of gentleness, humility, and charity.

You will be very happy, my dearest sister, my child, if amid all these follies of personal attachments, you live all in yourself, and all for God, who indeed alone merits to be served and followed with passion; for thus doing, my dear sister, you will give good example to all, and will gain holy peace and tranquillity for yourself. Let others, I beg you, philosophize about the reason you have for communicating: for it



is enough that your conscience, that you and I, know that this diligence in often looking over and repairing your soul, is greatly required for the preservation of it. If you wish to give account of it to some one, you may well say that you need to eat this divine food so often because you are very weakly, and without this refreshment, your spirit would easily faint away. Meanwhile, continue, my dearest sister, to clasp closely to your breast this dear Saviour. Let him be a lovely and sweet nosegay on your heart, in such sort that every one who approaches you may smell that you are perfumed, and know that your odour is the odour of myrrh.

Keep your soul in peace, notwithstanding these disquieting things round about you. Submit to the most secret providence of God what you find hard, and firmly believe that he will sweetly conduct you, your life, and all your affairs.

Do you know what the shepherds of Arabia do when they see it lighten and thunder, and see the air charged with thunderbolts? They withdraw under laurels, themselves and their flocks. When we see that persecutions or contradictions threaten us with some great pain, we must withdraw, ourselves and our affections, under the holy cross, by a sweet confidence that *all things work together unto good to them that love God.\**

So then, my dearest child, my sister, keep your heart entirely recollected in peace; keep yourself

\* Rom. viii. 28.

carefully from worry ; often throw your confidence on the providence of our Lord. Be quite certain that rather will heaven and earth pass away, than our Lord be wanting to your protection so long as you are his obedient child, or at least desirous to obey. Two or three times a-day think whether your heart is not disquieted about something ; and finding that it is so try at once to put it back in repose. Adieu, my dearest child. May God ever be in the midst of your heart. Amen.

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LETTER XLVII.

TO A LADY.

*The means to be all to God is to crucify our strongest inclinations.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—Now what shall I say to you ? Many things, without doubt, if I wished to follow my affections, which are always full for you, as I desire that yours be full for me, above all when you are in the little oratory. I beseech you there to pour them forth before God for my amendment ; as on my part I pour forth, not mine, which are unworthy, on account of the heart whence they come, but the blood of the Immaculate Lamb before the Eternal Father, for the good intention you have of being all his.

What happiness, my dear mother, to be all his, who, to make us his, made himself all ours ! But for this it is necessary to crucify in us all our affections, and specially those which are more strong and active, by

a continual slackening and tempering of the actions which proceed from them, that they may be done not with impetuosity, nor even by our own will, but by the will of the Holy Spirit.

Above all, my dear mother, we need a kind, sweet and loving heart towards our neighbour, and particularly when he is burdensome and displeasing to us; for then we have nothing to love in him but his relation to our Saviour, which, without any doubt, makes love more excellent and worthy, inasmuch as it is more pure and free from transitory conditions.

I pray our Lord to increase in you his holy love. I am, in him, your, &c.

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LETTER XLVIII.

TO A SUPERIOR OF THE VISITATION.

*God regards us with love, provided that we have good will. Our imperfections must neither astonish nor discourage us.*

It would have been to me a consolation beyond compare to see you all when I passed by; but God not having willed it, I could not will it. And meanwhile, my dearest daughter, I very willingly read your letters and answer them.

Our Blessed Lady knows, dearest child, whether her son thinks of you, and regards you with love! Yes, my dearest daughter, he thinks of you; and not only of you, but of the least *hair of your head*: this is an article of faith, and we may not have the least

doubt of it : but of course I know well you do not doubt of it ; you only express thus the aridity, dryness, and insensibility in which the lower portion of your soul finds itself now. *Indeed the Lord is in this place and I knew it not,\** said Jacob : that is, I did not perceive it, I had no feeling of it, it seemed not so to me. I have spoken of this in the book of the *Love of God*, treating of the death of the soul and of resignations ; I do not remember in what book.† And you can have no doubt whether God regards you with love ; for he regards lovingly the most horrible sinners in the world on the least true desire they have of conversion. And tell me, my dearest child, have you not the intention of being God's ? Do you not want to serve him faithfully ? And who gives you this desire and this intention, if not himself in his loving regard for you ? The way is not to examine whether your heart pleases him, but whether his heart pleases you ; and if you look at his heart, it will be impossible for it not to please you ; for it is a heart so gentle, so sweet, so condescending, so amorous of poor creatures, if only they acknowledge their misery ; so gracious towards the miserable, so good to penitents ! And who would not love this royal heart, paternally maternal towards us ?

You say rightly, my dearest child, that these temptations come because your heart is without tenderness towards God : for it is true that if you had tenderness you would have consolation, and if you had con-

\* Gen. xxviii. 16.

† Book ix.

solation you would no longer be in trouble. But, my daughter, the love of God does not consist in consolation, nor in tenderness: otherwise our Lord would not have loved his Father when he was *sorrowful unto death*, and cried out: My Father, my Father, *why hast thou forsaken me?*\* and it was exactly then that he made the greatest act of love it is possible to imagine.

In fact, we would always wish to have a little consolation and sugar on our food, that is, to have the feeling of love and tenderness, and consequently consolation; and similarly we would greatly wish to be without imperfection; but, my dearest child, we must patiently continue to be of human nature and not angelic.

Our imperfections must not give us pleasure; indeed we should say with the holy Apostle: *Unhappy man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*† But they must neither astonish us nor take away our courage; we must, indeed, draw from them submission, humility, and distrust of ourselves, but not discouragement, nor affliction of heart, and much less distrust of the love of God towards us. So God does not love our imperfections and venial sins, but he much loves us in spite of them. So again, as the weakness and infirmity of the child displeases the mother, and still not only does she not cease to love it, but even loves it tenderly and with compassion; in the same way, though God does not love our imper-

\* Mat. xxvi. 38.

† Rom. vii. 24.

fections and venial sins, he does not cease to love us tenderly ; so that David had reason to say to our Lord : *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.\**

Well, now, that is enough, my dearest daughter ; live joyous, our Lord regards you, and regards you with love, and with as much more tenderness as you have more infirmity. Never let your spirit voluntarily nourish thoughts contrary to this ; and when they come do not regard them in themselves ; turn your eyes from their iniquity, and turn them back towards God with a courageous humility, to speak to him of his ineffable goodness, with which he loves our failing, poor and abject human nature, in spite of its infirmities.

Pray for my soul, my dearest child, and recommend me to your dear novices, all of whom I know, except Sister Colin.

I am entirely yours in our Lord. May he live for ever and ever (*pour tout jamais*) in our hearts ! Amen.

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## LETTER XLIX.

TO A LADY.

*A Confessor may for various reasons withdraw frequent communion from certain persons ; this privation must be borne with a humble obedience, to make it advantageous.*

You have by this time, my dearest daughter, my answer to the letter which N. brought me ; and here

\* Ps. vi. 3.

is the answer to yours of the 14th of January. You have done well to obey your Confessor, whether he has withdrawn from you the consolation of communicating often in order to try you, or whether he has done it because you did not take sufficient care to correct your impatience. I think he has done it for both motives, and that you ought to persevere in this patience as long as he orders you, since you have every reason to believe that he does nothing without proper consideration; and if you obey humbly, one communion will be more useful in its effect than two or three otherwise. For there is nothing which makes meat so profitable as to take it with appetite and after exercise: the delay will give you a greater appetite, and the exercise you will take in mortifying your impatience will reinvigorate your spiritual stomach.

Meanwhile, humble yourself gently, and often make an act of love of your own abjection. Remain somewhat in the attitude of the Chananæan: Yes, Lord, I am not worthy *to eat the bread of the children*,\* if I am truly a dog that snarl at and bite my neighbour without cause by my words of impatience. But if the dogs do not eat the bread, at least they have the crumbs from their master's table. So, O my sweet master! I beg, if not your body, at least the benedictions which it sheds on those who approach it with love. These are the sentiments you might have,

\* Mat. xv. 26.

my dearest daughter, on the days when you were wont to communicate and do not.

The feeling you have of being all God's is not a deceitful one; but it requires that you should occupy yourself a little more in the exercise of virtues, and have a special care to acquire those in which you find yourself most wanting. Read again the *Spiritual Combat*, and give a special attention to the teachings therein: it will be very useful to you.

The sentiments we feel in prayer are good; but still we must not so delight in them as not diligently to employ ourselves in virtues and the mortification of the passions. I pray ever for the good mother of the dear daughters. And, indeed, since you are in the way of prayer, and the good Carmelite mother helps you, it is sufficient. I recommend myself to her prayers and yours; and am, without end or reserve, very perfectly yours. *Vive Jésus.* Amen.

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## LETTER L.

TO A LADY.

*The Saint exhorts her to fidelity in her spiritual exercises and the practice of virtue. How we are to treat our heart when it has committed a fault.*

MADAM,—I truly and greatly desire that when you expect to gain any consolation by writing to me, you should do so with confidence. We must join these



two things together : an extreme affection for practising our exercises very exactly, whether of prayer or virtues, and a not being troubled or disquieted or astonished if we happen to commit a fault in them ; for the first point depends on our fidelity, which ought always to be entire, and grow from hour to hour ; the second comes from our infirmity, which we can never put off during this mortal life.

My dearest daughter, when faults happen to us, let us examine our heart at once, and ask it if it has not still living and entire the resolution of serving God ; and I hope it will answer us *yes*, and that it would rather suffer a thousand deaths than withdraw itself from this resolution.

Thereupon let us ask it : why then do you now fail, why are you so cowardly ? It will answer : I have been surprised, I know not how ; but I am now fallen, like this.

Well, my child, it must be forgiven ; it is not by infidelity it falls, it is by infirmity ; it needs then to be corrected gently and calmly, and not to be more vexed and troubled. We ought to say to it : Well now, my heart, my friend, in the name of God take courage, let us go on, let us beware of ourselves, let us lift ourselves up to our help and our God. Ah ! yes, my dear daughter, we must be charitable towards our soul, and not scold it, so long as we see that it does not offend of set purpose.

You see, in this exercise we practise holy humility ; what we do for our salvation is done for the service

of God; for our Lord himself has worked out in this world only our salvation. Do not desire the battle, but await it with firm foot. May our Lord be your strength. I am, in him, your, &c.

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LETTER LI.

TO A SUPERIOR OF THE VISITATION.

*Considerations on the death of the Blessed Virgin.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I was considering last evening, according to the weakness of my spiritual eyes, this Queen dying of a last attack of a fever dearer than all health—the fever of love, which, drying up her heart, at last inflames it, burns it and consumes it, in such way that it gives up its holy spirit, which goes straight away into the hands of her son. Ah! may this holy Virgin deign to make us live by her prayers in this holy love! May it be for ever the most unique object of our heart. May our union for ever give glory to the love of God, which bears the sacred name of Unitive!

I have the happiest of birthdays, my dearest mother, in having been born into this world on the day when the most holy Virgin, our Queen, appeared in heaven, *in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety*.\* Thus we shall speak on Sunday, the day on which I was born, and which has this glory, that

\* Ps. xliv. 10.

it was during the octave of this great Assumption. Ah, God! dearest mother, how entirely would I hollow out our heart before this exalted Lady, that it may please her to fill it with that overflowing dew of Hermon, which distils on all sides from her holy plenitude of graces.

O how absolute and sovereign is the perfection of this dove, in comparison of which we are ravens! Ah! Amid the deluge of our miseries, I have wished that she should find the olive branch of holy love, of purity, of sweetness, of prayer—to carry it back in sign of peace to her dear dove-spouse, to her Noe. *Vive Jésus, vive Marie*, the support of my life! Amen.

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## LETTER LII.

### TO A LADY.

*We must support with patience our own imperfections.—Advice on meditation.—The judgments of the world.*

MADAM, MY DEAREST SISTER,—I see you ever languishing with the desire of a greater perfection. I praise this longing, for it delays you not, I well know; on the contrary, it excites and goads you on to acquire what you want.

You live, you tell me, with a thousand imperfections. It is true, my good sister, but do you not try from hour to hour to make them die in you? It is a certain truth that so long as we are here encom-

passed with this heavy and corruptible body, there is always in us a something wanting, I know not what.

I am not sure whether I have said to you that it is necessary to have patience with all the world, and firstly with ourselves. We are more troublesome to ourselves than any one else is to us, as soon as we are able to distinguish between the old and the new Adam, the interior and the exterior man.

Well ; you say you always have your book in your hand for meditation ; otherwise you do nothing. What does that matter ? Whether book in hand, and reading a little at a time, or without book, what difference ? When I said you were only to take half an hour, it was in the beginning, when I was afraid of hurting your imagination ; but now, there is no danger in employing an hour.

On the day of communion, there is no danger in doing all sorts of good things or in working ; there would be more in doing nothing. In the primitive Church, where all communicated every day, think you that therefore they kept their arms folded ? And St. Paul, who said Holy Mass habitually, nevertheless gained his sustenance by the work of his hands.

From two things only must we keep ourselves on the day of communion : from sin, and from delights and pleasures eagerly sought out (*recherchés*). As to those which are of duty, or required, or necessary, or taken in an honest spirit of condescension to others, these are not at all forbidden on that day ; on the contrary, they are counselled, under the condition of

observing a gentle and holy modesty. No, I would not abstain from going to an innocent feast or party (*assemblée*) on that day, if I was invited, though I would not seek it out.

You ask me if those who wish to live with some perfection can see so much of the world. Perfection, my dear lady, does not lie in not seeing the world, but in not tasting or relishing it. All that the sight brings us is *danger*; for he who sees it is in some peril of loving it: but he who is fully resolved and determined, is not harmed by the sight. In a word, my sister, the perfection of charity is the perfection of life; for the life of our soul is charity. Our first Christians were of the world in body and not in heart, and failed not to be very perfect. My dear sister, I would wish no pretence in us, no pretence in the proper sense of the word. Sincerity (*rondeur*) and simplicity are our great virtues.

But I am vexed, you say, about the incorrect judgments made of me; I do no good, and am thought to do some: and you ask me a remedy. This is it, my dear child, as the saints have taught it me: if the world despises us, let us be glad; for it is right—we know that we are fit to be despised: if it esteems us, let us despise its esteem and its judgment, for it is blind. Trouble yourself little about what the world thinks, put yourself in no anxiety about it, despise its esteem and its disesteem (*son prix et son mépris*), and let it say what it likes, good or ill.

So I do not approve that we should commit a fault,

to give a bad opinion of ourselves; this would be to err, and to make our neighbour err. On the contrary, I wish that keeping our eyes on our Lord, we should do our works without regarding what the world thinks about them nor what view it takes of them. We may avoid giving a good opinion of self, but not seek to give a bad one, especially by faults, committed on purpose. In a word, despise almost equally whichever opinion the world will have of you, and put yourself in no trouble about it. To say that we are not what the world thinks, when it thinks well of you is good; for the world is an impostor, it always says too much, either in good or evil.

But what, again, do you say? That you envy others whom I prefer to you? And the worst is that you say you know well I prefer them. How do you know it well, my dear sister? In what do I prefer others? No, believe me, you are dear and very dear to me; and I well know that you do not prefer others to me, though you ought to do so; but I am speaking to you in confidence.

Our two sisters, who are in the country, have more need of assistance than you who are in the town, where you abound in exercises, in counsel, and in all that is needful, while they have no one to help them.

And as to our sister Du N. Do you not see that she is alone, not having the inclination to accept those whom our father proposes to her? And our father does not like those whom we propose; for according to what she writes to me, our father cannot approve the

choice of M. Vardôt. Do I not owe more compassion to this poor crucified one than to you, who, thanks to God, have so many advantages?

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## LETTER LIII.

TO A LADY.

*The remedy for calumny is not to trouble ourselves about it.  
Advice on Confession.*

MY DEAREST SISTER,—I have not had the pleasure of seeing Monsieur N., but I am not ignorant that you have been afflicted on account of certain libels which have appeared yonder, and I should much wish always to bear your troubles and labours, or at least to help you to bear them. But since the distance of our residences does not allow me to help you in any other way, I beseech our Lord to be the protector of your heart and to banish therefrom all inordinate grief.

Truly, my dearest sister, the greater part of our ills are rather imaginary than real. Do you think the world believes these libels? It is possible that some take an interest about them, and that others imbibe some suspicion; but know, that your soul being good and truly resigned into the hands of our Lord, all attacks of this sort vanish into air like smoke; and the more wind there is, the quicker they disappear. The harm of calumny is never so well cured as by appearing not to feel it, by despising contempt, and showing by our firmness that we are beyond attack,

principally in the case of a libel of this kind: for a calumny, which has neither father nor mother willing to acknowledge it, shows that it is illegitimate.

Now, my dearest sister, I want to tell you a saying of St. Gregory to an afflicted bishop: *Ah!* said he, *if your heart was in heaven, the winds of earth would not ruffle it at all; he who has renounced the world, can be harmed by nothing that belongs to the world.* Throw yourself at the feet of the crucifix, and see how many injuries *He* receives: beseech him, by the meekness with which he received them, to give you strength to bear these little evil reports which, as to his sworn servant, have fallen to your lot. Blessed are the poor, for they shall be rich in heaven, that kingdom belonging to them: and blessed are the injured and calumniated, for they shall be honoured of God.

As to the rest of your letter:—the annual review of our souls is made, as you understand, to supply the defects of ordinary confessions, to provoke and strengthen by exercise a more profound humility, but especially to renew, *not good purposes, but good resolutions.* These we must apply as remedies to the inclinations, habits, and other sources of our trespasses, to which we find ourselves most subject.

Now, it would indeed be more suitable to make this review before him who had received our general confession, in order that by the consideration and reference of the preceding life to the following life, we might better take the requisite resolutions; that would be more desirable; but the souls which, like you, have not this



convenience, may make use of some other confessor, the most discreet and wise they can find.

To your second difficulty I answer, my dearest sister, that there is no need whatever in your review to signify in particular the number or little circumstances of your faults, but it suffices to say in general what are your principal falls, what your primary weaknesses of spirit. You need not say how many times you have fallen, but whether you are very subject and given to the sin. For example, you must not scrutinize yourself to see how often you have fallen into anger; perhaps this would give you too much to do; but simply say whether you are subject to this irregularity; whether, when it happens, you remain a long time entangled in it; whether it is with much bitterness and violence. In fine, say what are the occasions which most provoke you to it; the passion for play, self-consequence or pride, melancholy or obstinacy (of course I give them as examples): and thus in a short time you will have finished your little review, without much tormenting either your memory or your leisure.

As to the third difficulty,—some falls into mortal sin, provided we have no intention of staying in them, and do not go to sleep in the sin, do not prevent our making progress in devotion. This devotion, although lost by sinning mortally, is nevertheless recovered at the first true repentance we make of the sin, when, as I say, we have not long remained steeped in sin. So that these annual reviews are greatly salutary to souls which are still a little feeble; for if, perchance, the first

resolutions have not altogether strengthened them, the second and third will confirm them more; and at last, by dint of resolving often, we remain entirely resolved, and we must not at all lose courage, but with a holy humility look at our weakness, declare it, and ask pardon, and beg the help of heaven. I am your, &c.

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## LETTER LIV.

TO A LADY.

*The consideration of the sufferings of our Saviour ought to console us in our pains.*

IT is the truth, my dearest daughter, that nothing is more capable of giving us a profound tranquillity in this world than often to behold our Lord in all the afflictions which happened to him from his birth to his death. We shall see there such a sea of contempt, of calumnies, of poverty and indigence, of abjections, of pains, of torments, of nakedness, of injuries, and of all sorts of bitterness, that in comparison with it we shall know that we are wrong when we call our little accidents by the names of afflictions, pains and contradictions; and that we are wrong in desiring patience for such trifles, since a single little drop of modesty is enough for bearing these things well.

I know exactly the state of your soul, and I seem to see it always before me, with all these little emotions of sadness, of surprise and of disquiet that come

troubling it. They do so because it has not yet driven deep enough down into the will the foundations of love of the cross and abjection. My dearest daughter, a heart which greatly esteems and loves Jesus Christ crucified, loves his death, his pains, his torments, his being spat on, his insults, his destitutions, his hungers, his thirsts, his ignominies; and when some little participation of these comes to it, it makes a very jubilee (*il en jubile*) over them for joy, and embraces them amorously.

You must then every day, not in prayer, but out of prayer, when you are moving about, make a study of our Lord amid the pains of our redemption, and consider what a blessedness it will be to you to share in them; you must see in what occasions you may gain this advantage, that is, the contradictions you may perhaps meet in all your desires, but especially in the desires which will seem to you the most just and lawful; and then, with a great love of the cross and passion of our Lord, you must cry out with St. Andrew: *O good cross, so loved by my Saviour, when will you receive me into your arms?*

Look you, my dearest child, we are too delicate when we call *poverty* a state in which we have not hunger, nor cold, nor ignominy, but simply some little contradiction to our desires. When we see one another again, remind me to speak to you a little about the tenderness and delicateness of your dear heart: you have need for your peace and repose, to be cured of this before all things; and you must form clearly in yourself the idea of eternity; whoever thinks well on

this troubles himself little about what happens in these three or four moments of mortal life.

Since you are able to fast half Advent, you can continue to the end ; I am quite willing for you to communicate two days together when you have the convenience. You may certainly go, only go with devotion, to Mass after dinner ;\* it is the old fashion of Christians. Our Lord does not regard these little things: reverence is in the heart, you must not let your spirit feed on these little considerations. Adieu, my dearest daughter, hold me ever as all yours ; for in true truth I am so. God bless you. Amen.

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LETTER LV.

TO A LADY.

*The Saint recommends her peace of the soul and trust in God.*

*October, 1617.*

I FIRMLY BELIEVE, my dearest daughter, that your heart receives consolation from my letters, which are also written to you with an incomparable affection, since it has pleased God that my affection towards you should be quite paternal ; according to which, I cease not to wish you the height of all blessings.

Keep your courage ever high, I beseech you, my dearest daughter, in the confidence which you should have in our Lord, who has cherished you, giving you so

\* That is after the morning meal.

many humble attractions to his service ; and cherishes you, continuing them to you, and will cherish you, giving you holy perseverance.

I do not understand, in good sooth, how souls which have given themselves to the divine goodness, are not always joyous : for is there a happiness equal to this ? Nor should imperfections which may arise trouble you at all ; for we do not wish to entertain them, or even to stay our affections on them. Remain, then, quite in peace, and live in humility and sweetness of heart.

You have well known, my dearest daughter, all our little afflictions, which I might well have had reason to call great, had I not seen a special love of God towards the souls whom he has withdrawn from amongst us ; for my brother died as a religious among soldiers ; my sister as a saint among religious. It is only to recommend them to your prayers that I say just this word.

Your husband is quite right to love me ; for I wish ever to honour him and you, my dearest daughter. I figure to myself that you always have a cordial affection for me, and your soul will answer you for me that I am yours, since the Lord and Creator of our spirits has made this tie between us. For ever may his name be blessed ! and that he may make you eternally his, is the continual desire, my dearest daughter, of your, &c.

## LETTER LVI.

TO AN ECCLESIASTIC.

*Advantage of Christian friendship over that of the children of the world.*

September, 1617.

AMID the incertitudes of the desirable journey which was to bring us together for several months, my dearest brother, I regret nothing so much as to see deferred the happiness which our hearts promised themselves of being able to entertain one another at will on the subject of our holy intentions. But the world and all its affairs are so subject to the laws of inconstancy that we must suffer the inconvenience of them, while our hearts may say: *I shall never be moved.\** No, nothing shall shake us in the love of the cross, and in the dear union which the crucifix has made between our spirits. But now is the time when we must use the advantage which our friendship has over that of the children of this world, and make it live and gloriously reign, in spite of absence and the division of abodes; for its author is not tied to time or place. Truly, my dearest brother, these friendships which God has made are independent of all that is outside God.

Now, if I were truly *Theophilus*,† as your great prelate calls me (rather according to the greatness of his charity than his knowledge of my infirmities), how

\* Ps. xxix. 7.

† God-lover.

delightful should I be to you, my dearest brother ! But if you cannot love me because I am not such, love me that I may so become, praying our great *Androphilus*\* to make me by his prayers *Theophilus*. I hope to go in a few days to take a little holy repose with him, who is our common phoenix, to smell the burning cinnamon, in which he wishes to die. He will live again amid the flames of sacred love, of which he describes the holy properties in a book which he is composing.

But who can have told you that our good Sisters of the Visitation have been in trouble about their places and buildings ! O my dear brother ! *The Lord hath been made a refuge for us* : † our Lord is the refuge of their soul ; are they not too happy ? And as our good mother, all vigorous in her feeble state, said to me yesterday : If the sisters of our congregation are very humble and faithful to God, they will have the heart of Jesus, their crucified Spouse, for their dwelling and abiding-place in this world, and his heavenly palace for their eternal habitation.

I needs must say into the ear of your heart, so lovingly beloved by mine, that I have an inexpressible sweetness of spirit in seeing the moderation of this dear mother, and the total disengagement from things of earth which she has testified amid all these little contrarieties. I say this to your heart only : for I have taken a resolution to say nothing of her who has heard the voice of the God of Abraham : *Go forth*

\* Man-lover.

† Ps. lxxxix. 1.

*out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee.\** In truth she does that, and more than that. Well, it means that I recommend her to your prayers, because the frequent attacks of her maladies often give us attacks of fear, although I cease not to hope that the God of our fathers will multiply her devout seed as the stars of heaven and the sand we see on the beach of the seas.

But, my God, I say too much on a subject whereon I meant to say nothing: at the same time it is to you, to whom all things may be said, since you have a heart incomparable in affection for him who, with an amorous respect, protests to you that he is incomparably, sir, &c.

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## LETTER LVII.

*On humility of heart and ravishments.*

WE ought not to desire extraordinary things, as, for instance, that God should do to us as to St. Catherine of Sienna, taking away our heart, and in its place putting his precious own; but we must wish that our poor hearts should henceforth live only under the obedience of the heart of this Saviour; this will be quite imitation enough of St. Catherine in this point: thus shall we be meek, humble and charitable. And since the heart of our Lord has no more affectionate

\* Gen. xii. 1.



law than meekness, humility and charity, we must keep quite strong in us these dear virtues—sweetness towards our neighbour and very amiable humility towards God. True sanctity consists in the love of God, and not in foolishnesses of imaginations, of ravishments, which feed self-love, but starve obedience and humility: to wish to play the extatic is an abuse. But let us come to the exercise of true and veritable meekness and submission, renunciation of self, pliancy of heart, love of abjection, condescension to the desires of others; it is this which is the true and most loveable extasy of the servants of God.

When we see a person who in prayer has ravishments by which he goes out from and mounts above himself in God, and yet has no extasies in his life, that is, leads not a life lifted up and united to God by abnegation of worldly concupiscences, and mortification of natural will and inclinations, by an interior meekness, simplicity, humility, and above all by a continual charity—then we may believe that all these ravishments are very doubtful and perilous; they are ravishments proper to make men wonder, but not to sanctify them. For what good does a soul get from being ravished unto God by prayer, if in its conversation and life it is ravished away by earthly, low, and natural affections? To be above self in prayer, and below self in life and operation; to be an angel in prayer and a beast in intercourse with men, this is to go lame on both legs; it is to swear by God and by Melchom; and to sum up, it is a true sign that such

ravishments and such extasies are only amusements and deceits of the evil spirit.

Blessed are they who live a superhuman, extatic *life*, raised above themselves, though not ravished above themselves in prayer! Many saints are in heaven who were never in ecstasy or rapture of contemplation; for of how many martyrs and great saints does history tell us that they have never had in prayer any other privilege than devotion and fervour! But there was never a saint but has had the ecstasy of life and operation, overcoming himself and his natural inclinations. In fact, there have been seen in our age several persons who thought themselves, and every one thought with them, very often divinely ravished in ecstasy; and at last it was discovered that really it was only diabolical illusions and amusements.

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### LETTER LVIII.

TO A PROTESTANT WHO HAD ASKED TO HAVE A  
CONFERENCE WITH HIM.

SIR,—My design was not to enter into any conference with you; the necessity of my near departure entirely took away the opportunity of it. If conferences are not well regulated, and accompanied by leisure and convenience for carrying them through to the end, they are without fruit. I only look at the glory

of God, and the salvation of my neighbour. When this cannot be procured, I hold no conference.

You well know what I mean when I speak of the Book of Machabees. There are two; and two make one volume. I will not take the trouble to say more, for I do not quibble.

It is true that we say and insist on it, and you deny and regret it. The Church has always been fought against in the same way; but your negations ought to be proved by the same sort of proofs as you demand from us; it is for the denier to prove, when he denies against possession, and when his negation is to be the foundation of his argument. Jurisconsults testify it to you; the maxim is taken from them; you will not refuse its application.

Prayer for the dead has been used by all the ancient Church, Calvin himself acknowledges it; the Fathers have proved it by the authority of the Book of Machabees, and the general usage of their predecessors. See the end and the beginning of St. Augustine's book on this subject: we walk in their steps and follow their traces.

Neither the book of Machabees, nor the Apocalypse were recognized so soon as the others; both, however, were equally so at the Council of Carthage, at which St. Augustine assisted. Some canonical books were lawfully doubted of for a time, which may not be doubted of now: the passages I have cited are so express, that they cannot be turned to another sense. I conjure you by the bowels of Jesus Christ, to

be willing henceforth to read the Scriptures and the ancient Fathers with a mind dispossessed of prejudices; you will see that the principal and essential features of the face of the ancient Church are preserved in that which is now.

I am told that God has placed in you many gifts of Nature; do not abuse them so as to keep away those of grace; and consider attentively the true bearing of the matter about which you want to confer. If opportunity allowed, be sure that I would not refuse, any more than I would refuse Messieurs of Geneva, my neighbours, if they desired it on proper terms.

It would not be possible with profit to have conferences in writing; we are too far apart. And further, what could we write that has not been repeated a hundred times? Give, for your salvation's sake, attentive meditation to your reasons and to the ancient Fathers; and I will give my poor and feeble prayers; these I will present to the mercy of our Saviour, to whom and for whose love I offer you my service, and am your, &c.

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## LETTER LIX.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*The Saint deplores the misfortune of a lady who had fallen  
into heresy.*

*2nd December, 1609.*

O GOD! What a misfortune! This poor thing then means to be lost with her husband! The Confessions

of St. Augustine, and the chapter I showed her when I passed that way, ought to have been enough to hold her back, if she is only driven to the precipice by the considerations she mentions. God, at the day of his great Judgment, will justify himself against her, and will make clearly appear why she has abandoned him. Ah! one abyss calls upon another. I will pray God for her, and especially on the feast of St. Thomas, whom I will conjure by his happy infidelity, to intercede for this poor soul so unhappily unfaithful.

What thanksgivings do we owe to this great God, my dear child? To think that I, so many ways tempted, in a frail and unstable age, to surrender myself to heresy, and that I have not cared so much as even to look upon it except to spit in its face, and that my feeble and young soul, going through all the most infected books should not have had the least emotion of this miserable evil! O God! when I think of this benefit, I tremble with horror at my ingratitude.

But let us calm ourselves in the loss of these souls; for Jesus Christ, to whom they were more dear, would not let them go after their own sense, if his greater glory did not require it. It is true we ought to regret them and sigh after them, like David, over Absalom hanged and lost. There was no great harm in that indignation you showed when speaking with her. Alas! my child, sometimes we cannot contain ourselves in occurrences so deserving of abhorrence.

The other day, at an early hour, a very learned man, and one who had been a minister for a long time, came to see me, and telling me how God had withdrawn him from heresy:—I had for instructor, he said, the most learned bishop in the world. I expected he would name some one of the great reputations of this age: he said, St. Augustine. His name is Corneille, and he is just now printing a splendid book for the Faith. He is not yet received into the Church, and has given me a hope that I shall receive him. This good man went off contented with me, saying that I had lovingly entertained him, and that I had the true spirit of the Christian. We must conclude that these ancient Fathers have a spirit which *breathes* against heresy, even in the points where they are not disputing against it.

When I was at Paris, and preaching in the Queen's Chapel on The Day of Judgment (it was no sermon of controversy), a young lady was present out of curiosity, named Madame de Perdreauville; she was caught in the meshes, and on this sermon she took a resolution to get instructed, and three weeks afterwards she brought all her family to confession to me, and I was godfather to them all in Confirmation. Do you see? That sermon, which was not made against heresy, still breathed against heresy: for God on that occasion gave me that spirit in favour of those souls.

Since then I have always said that he who preaches with love preaches sufficiently against heretics, though he say not a single word of controversy against them.

And this is the same as to say that in general all the writings of the Fathers are suitable for the conversion of heretics.

O my God, dear child, how many perfections do I wish you! One for all, unity, simplicity. Live in peace and joyous, or at least contented, in all that God wishes and wills to do in your heart. I am in him and by him all yours. Your, &c. .

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LETTER LX.

TO HIS BROTHER, COADJUTOR OF GENEVA.

*About one of their friends who had turned Calvinist and gone into England.*

*Annecy, 21st November, 1620.*

HERE is a letter which I have opened without perceiving that it was not for me. O God! my dearest brother, what anguish did the reading of it cause to my soul! Certainly it is quite true that in all my life I have not had so painful a surprise. Is it possible that this soul can so have gone to ruin? He used to say so distinctly to me that he would never be aught else than child of the Roman Church; though he thought the Pope exceeded the limits of justice, to extend those of his authority. Meantime, after having cried out so strongly that it did not behove that the supreme Pastor, the ruler of the Church, should undertake to release subjects from the obedience of

the supreme prince of the commonwealth, whatever evil this prince might do;—he himself, for these pretended abuses, goes and becomes a rebel against this supreme Pastor; or (to speak after his language), against all the pastors of the Church in which he has been baptized and brought up!

He who did not find clearness enough, he used to say, in the passages of Scripture to prove the authority of St. Peter over the rest of Christians, how has he gone to place himself under the ecclesiastical authority of a king, whose power the Scripture has never authorized save for civil matters?

If he found that the Pope was exceeding the limits of his power by claiming some power over the temporal authority of princes, how will he find that the king, under whom he has gone to live, exceeds the limits of his authority, by claiming rights over the spiritual?

Is it possible that what brought back and kept St. Augustine to the Church has not been able to retain this spirit? Is it possible that the reverence for antiquity and rejection of novelty has not had the power to stop him?

Is it possible that he has believed that all the Church has so greatly erred, and that Huguenots or English Calvinists have so happily met with the truth everywhere, and not erred in the understanding of the Scripture? Whence can such universal knowledge of the sense of Scripture have come into those heads in the matters of our controversies, as that everywhere



they should be right, and we everywhere wrong, so that he must leave us to cling to them?

Alas ! my dear brother, you will soon perceive the trouble there is in my spirit, when I say all this to you. The modesty with which he behaves in writing to you, the friendship he begs from you with so much affection, and even submission, has made a great wound of condolence in my spirit, which cannot rest when it sees the soul of this friend perishing.

I was on the eve of getting a place made for him here, and M. N. had word to treat with him about it; and now there he is, separated from the rest of the world by the sea, and from the Church by schism and error ! However, God will draw his glory from this sin.

I have a particular inclination for that island and its king, and I unceasingly recommend its conversion to the Divine Majesty. I have confidence that I shall be heard with so many souls that sigh after this grace; and henceforth I will pray even more ardently, methinks, in consideration of that soul.

O my dearest brother, blessed are the true children of the Holy Church, in which have died all the true children of God. I assure you, my heart has a continual extraordinary throbbing on account of this fall, and a new courage to serve better the Church of the living God, and the living God of the Church.

Meanwhile we must keep this miserable news secret, though it is sure soon to be spread about on account of the number of the relatives and friends of him who

gives it you. And if you write to him, as he seems to ask, through M. Gabaléon, assure him that all the waters of England can never quench the flames of my affection, so long as I can keep any hope of his return to the Church, and to the way of eternal life.

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LETTER LXI.

(*From the original Latin.*)

TO HIS HOLINESS PAUL V.

*On the Venerable Ancina.*

I RECEIVED a very great joy and satisfaction when I heard that there would shortly appear the life and the details of all the actions of the most illustrious and most reverend Father and Lord, Juvenal Ancina. For since bishops, as said the great Bishop of Nazianzum, St. Gregory, are the painters of virtue, and as they have to paint so excellent a thing by their words and their works as accurately as possible, I do not doubt that in the life of our most illustrious and admirable Juvenal, we shall see a complete and perfect image of Christian justice, that is, of all virtues.

And, indeed, during the space of four or five months that I was negotiating at Rome the affairs of this See, by the command of my most devout and virtuous predecessor, Monseigneur Claude de Granier, I saw many men excelling in sanctity and doctrine, who were by their works illustrating *The City*, and in the City the

world (*in urbe orbem*); but amongst all these great personages, the virtue of this one particularly struck the eyes of my spirit.

For I admired, in the profound science of this man which embraced so many different subjects and with so full an erudition, a corresponding contempt of self; in the perfect gravity of his appearance, of his discourse and of his manners, as much also of grace and modesty; in his great solicitude for devotion, an equal remembrance of politeness and sweetness: so that *he did not tread down pride by another pride*, as happens with many, but by a true humility; and he did not display his charity by *knowledge which puffeth up*, but made his knowledge fruitful by the *charity which edifieth*. He was a man *beloved of God and men*, because he loved them with the purest charity. Now, I call purest charity that in which can scarce be found the smallest trace of self-love or *philautia*, a rare and exquisite charity, which is hardly met with even among those who make profession of piety, wherefore *from far and from the uttermost coasts is the price thereof*.\*

I have noticed that when the occasion presented itself, this man of God was accustomed so openly, frankly, and lovingly to praise the different institutes, virtues, teaching, and ways of serving God, of various religions, ecclesiastics, and laymen, as if he were a member of their congregations or meetings. And whilst he embraced with most sweet and entirely filial heart his own and his most beloved Congregation of

\* Prov. xxxi. 10.

the Oratory, he did not on that account more coldly, as often happens, or more weakly love, esteem, or extol other houses or assemblies of persons serving God.

This was why, looking only at the greater glory of God, he most lovingly guided with his own hand and influence, into the society which he thought most suited to them, those who, touched interiorly with heavenly love, desired to follow the course of a purer life, and sought his counsel: a man, in sooth, who was neither of *Paul*, nor of *Cephas*, nor of *Apollo*, but of Jesus Christ,\* and who listened not to those cold words, *mine* and *thine*, either in temporals or in spirituals; but did all things sincerely in Christ and for Christ.

Of this perfect charity of this Apostolic man I have an example now at hand. Just lately there died, in the College of the Clerks Regular of St. Paul in this city of Annecy, a most religious man, William Cramoisy, of Paris; with whom when I was once talking, in an ordinary way, I happened to mention the name of our most Reverend Juvenal Ancina. And he, suddenly filled with joy, said: "How grateful, how precious to me should be the memory of this man! For he as it were brought me forth again in Christ." And when he saw that I had a desire of hearing the whole thing fully, he thus continued:

"When I was twenty-four years old, Divine Providence had already attracted me to the religious life

\* 1 Cor. iii.

by many inspirations ; but I felt myself, from my weakness, so agitated by contrary temptations, that altogether despondent in my soul, I was seriously thinking of marriage ; and the affair had already gone so far among my friends that it seemed almost done.

“ But how great is the benignity of God ! When I entered the Oratory of Vallicelle, what should I hear but Father Juvenal Ancina preaching to the people, first on the inconstancy and weakness of the human heart, then on the magnanimity with which divine instincts are to be put in execution. He spoke with such skill of language and argument, that he seemed to shake off as with his hand the miserable slothfulness of my heart : so that at length, lifting up his voice as a trumpet, he compelled me to surrender. Wherefore, as soon as ever the sermon was finished, anxious and hesitating I go to him in a corner of the oratory where he was praying, as I think, for the happy issue of his sermon, and expose to him what was taking place in my soul.

“ He said : ‘ This matter must be treated more fully, and there is not time now, as the day grows late. So to-morrow, if you will come to me, we can more conveniently go into everything. Meantime, and this is the chief point, by prayer invoke the heavenly light.’

“ So I went next day, and sincerely declared all that I was doing about my vocation, on either side ; and particularly that I was chiefly afraid of the religious life because I was weak and delicate.

“When he had attentively heard and weighed all, that servant of God said: ‘On this very account it is, by Divine Providence, that there are in the Church various orders of religious—namely, that any one who could not give his life to those orders which are austere and devoted to exterior penance, may enter the milder. And here you have the Congregation of Clerks Regular of St. Paul, in which the discipline of religious perfection excellently flourishes; still it is not weighed down by any bodily labour so great but that by almost any man its customs and constitutions may be quite easily observed, with God’s favour: go to their college, and see for yourself whether it is not so.’ Nor from that time did the man of God cease his efforts till he had seen me enrolled and joined to this most venerable Congregation.”

From which it is easy to understand how great was the power of the great Juvenal Ancina in preaching, his wisdom in counselling, and his perfect and constant charity in helping his neighbour. For this very thing which I have just mentioned by way of example, I and several others know to have been done; and indeed, for myself, I openly declare that by the many letters which I have received from him through his affection to me, I have been vehemently united to the love of Christian virtue.

But after he was transferred from the excellent life of the Congregation of the Oratory to the most holy Episcopal office, then did his virtue begin to shine more splendidly, and more clearly, as was fitting, to send

forth its rays, as *a burning and shining light\** placed on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house.†

And, indeed, when in 1603, I went a little out of my direct journey, in order to salute him, at Carmagnola, a town of his diocese of Saluces, where he was then fulfilling his duty of pastoral visitation, I saw what love, mingled with veneration, his piety and wealth of virtues had excited in those people. For when they learnt that I had arrived, I cannot sufficiently express the ardour of soul with which, by a certain friendly violence, they drew me from the public hospice into the house of some noble citizen, saying that they would like, if they only could do it, to lodge in the midst of their bosoms a man who had gone out of his way for the sake of honouring their most beloved pastor.

Nor could they ever satisfy themselves in joyously expressing by words, and looks, the satisfaction felt at the presence of such a pastor; whilst he, with a certain most dignified familiarity, and most sweet good-will towards all, draw to himself at once their eyes and souls, and as a glorious and loving-hearted shepherd, *called his own sheep by name‡* to verdant pastures, and with his hands full of the salt of wisdom, enticed them, nay, drew them, to come after him.

In fine, I will say one word; may I say it without

\* John v. 35.

† Mat. v. 15.

‡ John x. 3.

offence? I do not remember that I have seen a man more copiously, more splendidly adorned with the gifts which the Apostle so earnestly desired for Apostolic men.



## BOOK VII.

### LETTERS OF THE SAINT ABOUT HIMSELF.

#### LETTER I.

MONSIEUR DE BOISY, COUNT DE SALES, TO HIS SON  
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

1595.

I CANNOT but praise your zeal,\* my son ; but I do not see that it can end in any good. You have already done more than was needed. The most sensible and the most prudent people say loudly that your perseverance is turning into a foolish obstinacy, and that it is tempting God to make a longer trial of your strength, and, in fine, that it is necessary to force these people to receive the faith simply by the cannon's mouth. For which reason I conjure you to allay, as soon as you possibly can, our disquiets and alarms, and to return to your family which ardently desires you, and above all to your mother, who is dying of grief at not seeing you, and of fear to lose you

\* In his missionary work for the Chablais.

altogether. But if my prayers are of no avail, I order you, in my quality of father, to return hither immediately.

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## LETTER II.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES TO HIS FATHER.

*He excuses himself for being unable to return.*

MY HONOURED FATHER,—Whatever respect I have for your orders, I cannot help telling you that it is impossible for me to obey them. You are not ignorant from whom, under God, and on God's part, I have received my mission. Am I able to withdraw myself from it without his leave? Apply then, if you please, to his Most Reverend Lordship: I am ready to quit, as soon as he speaks. In any case, I beseech you to consider those words of our Saviour: *He who shall persevere to the end shall be saved*;\* and these others of St. Paul: *He is not crowned that striveth, except he strive lawfully*.† *Our tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh an eternal weight of glory*.‡

\* Mat. x. 22.

† 2 Tim. ii. 5.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

LETTER III.

TO MADAME THE COUNTESS OF SALES, HIS MOTHER.

*He consoles her for his absence by the hope of seeing him  
again soon.*

*May, 1599.*

I WRITE you this, my dear and good mother, as I mount my horse for Chambéry. This note is not sealed, and I have no anxiety about it; for, by the grace of God, we are no longer in that trying time during which we had to hide ourselves in order to write to one another, and to say some words of friendship and consolation. *Vive Dieu*, my good mother; truly the remembrance of that time always produces in my soul some holy and sweet thought. Always preserve joy in our Lord, my good mother, and be assured that your poor son is well, by the Divine mercy, and is getting ready to go and see you the soonest, and stay with you the longest possible, for I am all yours, and you know that I am your son.

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LETTER IV.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*He speaks to her of the fruit of his Lent-preaching at Annecy,  
in 1607.*

*Annecy, about the 8th April, 1607.*

LOOK you, my dear child, you know well that Lent is the harvest-time of souls. I had not preached a

Lent in this dear town up to this, since I had been made bishop, except the first, in which I was *looked at* to see what I should do ; and I had enough to do to take up my position, and see after the general affairs of the diocese which had just freshly fallen on my shoulders. Now, know that I make my harvest, with tears partly of joy and partly of love. O my God ! to whom should I say these things, if not to my dear child ?

I have just found in our sacred nets a fish which I had so longed for these four years. I must confess the truth, I have been very glad, I say extremely glad over it. I recommend her to your prayers, that our Lord may establish in her heart the resolutions he has put therein. It is a lady, quite a golden lady, and magnificently fitted to serve her Saviour ; and if she persevere she will do so with fruit.

It is seven or eight days since I have thought of myself, or seen myself except on the surface ; for so many souls have addressed themselves to me that I might see and serve them, that I have had no leisure to think of my own. It is true that, to console you, I am bound to say that I still feel my spirit whole within my heart, for which I praise God ; for in truth this sort of occupation is extremely profitable to me. How do I wish that it may be very useful to those for whom I labour !

Live, my dear child, with our sweet Saviour, in his arms, during this holy Passion-tide ; may he for ever repose between your breasts, as a sacred bundle of

myrrh ; it will be to you a sovereign epithem for all your palpitations of heart. Oh ! this morning (for I must further say this), presenting the Son to the Father, I said to him in my soul : I offer you your heart, O Eternal Father ! deign in its favour to receive also ours. I named yours, and that of the young servant of God of whom I spoke, and some others. I did not know which to push the more forward, whether the new for its need, or yours for my affection. Think what a struggle !

So, then, remain always in peace in the arms of our Saviour, who loves you so dearly, and whose sole love ought to serve us as a general *rendezvous* for all our consolations. This holy love, my child, in which ours is founded, enrooted, increased, and nourished, will be eternally perfect and enduring. I am he whom God has given you irrevocably.

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LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

*He encourages her, by his example, patiently to suffer, that her gentleness, in domestic contradictions, should be put down to dissimulation.*

*Holy Saturday, 14th April, 1607.*

O, MY DEAREST CHILD, here we are at the end of the holy Lent and at the glorious resurrection ! Ah ! how I desire that we should be raised up again with our Lord ! I am now going to beg this of him, as I do

daily ; for I never applied my communions so earnestly to your soul as I have done this Lent, and with a particular sentiment of trust in this immense goodness, that it will be favourable to us.

Yes ; my dear child, we must have good courage. It is no harm for your patience in bearing domestic contradiction to be attributed to dissimulation. And do you think that I am exempt from such attacks ? But it is the truth, I only laugh about them when I remember them, which is but rarely. O God ! indeed am I not insensible to *other* accidents and evil insinuations ; how sensitive am I to the injurious and bad opinions which may be held about me ! It is true that they are neither stinging nor in great number ; but still I believe that if there were many more of them, I should not fail to bear them, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Oh ! courage, my very dear and well-beloved child. What is needful for us is, that our little portion of ointment should offend the nostrils of the world.

To God, my dearest child ; to God let us belong, in time and in eternity ! Let us ever unite our little crosses to his great one !

Yesterday (for I must say one more word to you) after the sermon in the town at which I assisted, I preached a sermon on the Passion before our religious of Sainte-Claire. They had begged this very hard of me. When it came to the part in which I was contemplating how the cross was laid on the shoulders of our Lord, and how he embraced it, and when I said

that in his cross and with it he acknowledged and took to himself all our little crosses, and kissed them all to sanctify them:—and when I came to say in particular that he kissed our drynesses, our contradictions, our bitternesses, I assure you, my dear child, that I was much consoled, and had difficulty to contain my tears.

For what reason do I say this? I know not, except that I could not help saying it to you. I had much consolation in this little sermon, at which twenty-five or thirty devout souls of the town assisted, besides those of the monastery: so that I had every opportunity to give the rein to my poor little affections on a worthy subject. May the good and gentle Jesus be for ever the king of our hearts! Amen.

I love our Celse-Bénigne and the little Françon.\* May God be for ever their God; and the angel who has guarded their mother bless them for ever! Yes, my child, for it has been a great angel who has given you your good desires. So may he give you the execution of them and perseverance. *Vive Jésus*, who has made me and keeps me for ever all yours. Amen.

\* Children of Madame de Chantal.

## LETTER VI.

## TO THE SAME.

*He informs her that he is going to visit his diocese ; he congratulates her on her love for sicknesses ; he promises to write often.*

MY DEAREST CHILD,—I have your letter of the 6th June, and I am just now getting on horseback for the Visitation, which will last five months ; judge for yourself whether I am ready to go into Burgundy, for my dear child, this act of visitation is a necessary one for me, and one of the chief of my charge. I start with great courage, and from this morning I have felt a particular consolation in undertaking it, though before, during several days, I had had a thousand vain apprehensions and sadnesses about it. These, however, only affected the skin of my heart, and not the interior ; it was like those little shiverings which come at the first feeling of cold. But, as I have said to you many times, our good God treats me as a very delicate child, for he exposes me to no rude shock. He knows my weakness, and that I am not one to stand such great trials. I tell you in this way my little affairs, because it does me much good. Oh ! how I congratulate you for truly loving your tertian fever ; for my part I figure to myself that if we had our sense of smell but a little refined, we should smell our afflictions all *bemusked*, and perfumed with a thousand sweet odours ; for although of themselves they are of unpleasant smell, still, coming out of the hand,—



nay, rather out of the bosom and heart of the Spouse, who is but perfume and balm itself,—they reach us the same, full of all sweetness. Keep, my dear child, keep your heart very large before God; walk ever joyously in his presence, he loves us, he cherishes us, he is all ours, this sweet Jesus. Let us be all his, let us only love him, only cherish him, and then, let darkness, let tempests surround us, let us have the waters of bitterness up to our chin, so long as he holds our garments there is nought to fear. I will often write to you, my dear child, and a thousand times I will bless you with the benedictions which God has given to me. Live joyous, whether in health or sickness, and clasp tightly your Spouse on your heart. My dear child, my dearest child, to whom I am what his divine majesty wills me to be, and which cannot be said. *Vive Jésus*, for ever! Amen.

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LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

*Sentiments which he felt in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament.*

O GOD! how full is my heart of things to tell you, my child, for to-day is the day of the Church's great feast, in which, bearing our Saviour in the procession, he has by his grace given me a thousand sweet thoughts, amidst which I have had difficulty to keep back my tears.

O God! I put in comparison the High Priest of the old law with myself, and considered how this High Priest carried a rich pectoral on his breast, adorned with twelve precious stones, and on it appeared the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; but I found my pectoral far more rich, though it was composed of only one stone, that Oriental pearl, which the strong mother conceived in her chaste womb, by the blessed dew of heaven; for, you see, I was holding this Divine Sacrament clasped tightly on my breast, and I considered how the names of the children of Israel were all marked on it, yes, the names of the daughters especially, and the name of one still more.

The falcon and the sparrow of St. Joseph came to my memory, and it seemed to me that I was a knight of the Order of God, bearing on my breast the same Son who lives eternally on his. Ah! how would I have wished that my heart should be opened to receive this precious Saviour, as was that of the gentleman whose history I told you.\* But alas! I had not the knife which was needed to cut it open, for it is only to be opened by love; I have indeed had great desires of this love, and I speak for our indivisible heart. This is what I can say to you. Live all in God and for God. I am with him absolutely yours.

\* See *Love of God*, Book VII. ch. 12.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME. (MADAME DE CHANTAL.)

*Why he was strong before great attacks. His relish for prayer.*

*The first Thursday, 6th September, 1607.*

How many things, my child, should I have to say to you, if I had the leisure! for I have received your letter of St. Anne's day, written in a particular style, and one which appeals to the heart, and requires an ample response.

You are going on well, my child; only continue: have patience with your interior cross. Ah! our Saviour allows it you, that one day you may know better what you are by yourself. Do you not see, my child, that the trouble of the day is made clear by the repose of the night? An evident sign that our soul has need only to resign itself entirely to its God, and to make herself indifferent in serving him, whether among thorns, or among roses. Would you really believe, my best child, that this very night I have had a little disquietude about something which certainly did not deserve that I should even think of it! However, it has made me lose two good hours of my sleep, a thing which rarely happens to me. But, further, I was laughing myself at my weakness; and my mind saw as clearly as the day that it was all the disquietude of a mere little child; yet was there no means to find the way out of it: and I knew well that

God wanted to make me understand that if assaults and great attacks do not trouble me, as in truth they do not, it is not by my own strength, but by the grace of my Saviour; and I lie not when I say that I feel myself consoled by the experimental knowledge which God gives me of myself.

I assure you that I am very firm in our resolutions, and that they please me much. I cannot say many things to you, for this good father starts in an hour, and I have Mass to say; I will leave then all the rest. You gave me great pleasure in one of your letters by asking me straight out, whether I was making my prayer. O my child! act so; ask me always the state of my soul; for I know well that your curiosity in this comes from the ardour of the charity which you bear me. Yes, my child, by the grace of God I can say now better than before, that I make mental prayer, because I do not fail a single day in this; except sometimes on a Sunday, on account of confessions; and God gives me the strength to get up sometimes before day-break for this purpose, when I foresee the multitude of the embarrassments of the day, and I do it all gaily; and meseems I have affection for it, and would greatly wish to be able to make it twice in the day; but it is not possible for me.

*Vive Jésus! Vive Marie!* Adieu, my dear child. God has made me, without end, without reserve, and beyond comparison, yours, &c.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

*On the death of his young sister, Jane de Sales, who died  
in the arms of Madame de Chantal.*

2nd November, 1607.

AH, WELL ! my dear daughter ; and is it not reasonable that the most holy will of God should be done, as much in the things we cherish as in others ? But I must hasten to tell you that my good mother has drunk this chalice with an entirely Christian constancy, and her virtue, of which I had always a high opinion, has by much exceeded my estimation.

On Sunday morning, she sent for my brother the Canon ; and because she had seen him very sad, and all the other brothers as well, the night before, she began by saying to him : “ I have dreamt all the night that my daughter Jane is dead. Tell me, I beseech you, is it not true ? ” My brother, who was awaiting my arrival to break it to her (for I was on my Visitation), seeing this good opening for presenting the chalice to her, and as she was lying in bed : “ It is true, mother,” he said, and no more, for he had not strength to add anything. “ God’s will be done,” said my good mother, and wept abundantly for some space ; and then, calling her Nicole, she said : “ I want to get up and go pray God in the chapel for my poor daughter,” and immediately did what she said. Not a single word of impatience, not a look of disquiet ; but

blessings of God, and a thousand resignations in her will. Never did I see a calmer grief; such tears that it was a marvel; but all from simple tenderness of heart, without any sort of passion, yet it was her dear child. Ah! then, this mother, should I not love her well?

Yesterday, All Saints' Day, I was the grand confessor of the family, and with the Most Holy Sacrament I sealed the heart of this mother against all sadness. For the rest, she thanks you infinitely for the care and maternal love which you have shown towards this deceased little one, with as much obligation to you as if God had preserved her by your means. The brothers (*la fraternité*) say as much, who in truth have testified extremely good dispositions in this affliction, especially our Boisy, whom I love the more for it.

I well know that you would gladly ask me: And you, how did you bear yourself? Yes, for you want to know what I am doing. Ah! my child, I am as human as I can be; my heart was grieved more than I should ever have thought. But the truth is, that the pain to my mother and your pain have much swollen mine; for I have feared for your heart, and my mother's. But as for the rest, I will always take the side of Divine Providence: it does all well, and disposes of all things for the best. What a happiness for this child to have been *taken away, lest wickedness should alter her understanding*,\* and to have left this miry place before she had got soiled therein! We

\* Wisdom, iv. 11.

gather strawberries and cherries before bergamots and pippins (*capendus*), but it is because their season requires it. Let God gather what he has planted in his orchard: he takes everything in its season.

You may think, my dear daughter, how tenderly I loved this little child. I had brought her forth to her Saviour, for I had baptized her with my own hand, some fourteen years ago. She was the first creature on whom I exercised my order of priesthood. I was her spiritual father, and fully promised myself one day to make out of her something good. And what made her very dear to me (and I speak the truth) was that she was yours. But still, my dear child, in the midst of my heart of flesh, which has had such keen feelings about this death, I perceive very sensibly a certain sweetness, tranquillity, and a certain gentle repose of my spirit in the Divine Providence, which spreads abroad in my heart a great contentment in its pains.

Here, then, are my movements represented as far as I can. But you, what do you mean, when you tell me that you found yourself on this occasion such as you were? Tell me, I beseech you: was not our needle always turning to its bright pole, to its holy star, to its God? Your heart, what has it been doing? Have you scandalized those who saw you in this matter and in this event? Now this, my dear child, tell me clearly; for, do you see, it was not right to offer either your own life or that of one of your other children, in exchange for that of the departed one.

No, my dear child, we must not only consent for God to strike us, but we must let it be in the place which 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 because he died reprobate (*perdu*); in such case we must beseech God; but in temporal loss, O my daughter! let God touch and strike whatever string of our lute he chooses, he will never make but a good harmony. Lord Jesus! without reserve, without *if*, without *but*, without exception, without limitation, your will be done; in father, in mother, in daughter, in all and everywhere! Ah! I do not say that we must not wish and pray for their preservation; but we must not say to God, leave this and take that; my dear child, we must not say so. And we will not. No, no; no, my child, by help of the grace of his Divine goodness.

I seem to see you, my dear child, with your vigorous heart, which loves and wills powerfully. I congratulate it thereon: for what are these half-dead hearts good for? But it behoves that we make a particular exercise, once every week, of willing and loving the will of God more vigorously, (I go further) more tenderly, more amorously, than anything in the world; and this not only in bearable occurrences, but in the most unbearable. You will find more than I can describe in the little book of the *Spiritual Combat*, which I have so often recommended to you.

Ah! my child, to speak truth, this lesson is high; but also God, for whom we learn it, is the Most



High. You have, my child, four children ; you have a father-in-law, a dear brother, and then again a spiritual father : all this is very dear to you, and rightly ; for God wills it. Well, now, if God took all this from you, would you not still have enough in having God ? Is that not *all*, in your estimation ? If we had nought but God, would it not be enough ?

Alas ! the Son of God, my dear Jesus, had scarce so much on the cross, when, having given up and left all for love and obedience to his Father, he was as if left and given up by him ; and, as the torrent of his passion swept off his bark to desolation, hardly did he perceive the needle, which was not only turned towards, but inseparably joined with, his Father. Yes, he was one with his Father, but the inferior part knew and perceived nothing of it whatever : a trial which the divine goodness has made and will make in no other soul, for it could not bear it.

Well then, my child, if God takes everything from us, he will never take himself from us, so long as we do not will it. But more ; all our losses and our separations are but for this little moment. Oh ! truly, for so little a time as this, we ought to have patience.

I pour myself out, meseems, a little too much. But why ? I follow my heart, which never feels it says too much with this dear daughter. I send you an escutcheon to satisfy you ; and since it pleases you to have the funeral services where this child rests in the body, I am willing ; but without great pomp,

beyond what Christian custom requires: what good is the rest? You will afterwards draw out a list of all these expenses, and those of her illness, and send it to me, for I wish it so; and meantime we shall beseech God here for this soul, and will properly do its little honours. We shall not send for its *quarantal*:\* no, my child, so much ceremony (*mystère*) is not becoming for a child who has had no rank in this world; it would get one laughed at. You know me: I love simplicity both in life and in death. I shall be very glad to know the name and the title of the church where she is. This is all on this subject. Yours, &c.

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LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

*He sends copies of the Introduction to the Devout Life for several persons.*

*End of February, 1609.*

MY GOD! how welcome will you be, my dear child; and how dearly do I feel my soul embrace yours. Start then on the first fine day you see, after your horse has rested, which, doubtless, cannot well have been sent back to you till three days ago, on account of the rains which have fallen in this country. I wish that you may have a good and happy journey, and that my little daughter may not suffer from the fatigue of the road, but arriving in good time in the

\* Forty days' mind.

evening, and sleeping well, I hope she will be all right.

M. de Ballon so greatly desires that you should make your stay with him, that I am forced to desire it also, for the good friendship he bears us.

Madame du Puits-d'Orbe had written to say she wanted to come with you ; but the season is not proper for her, nor could I wish to have her in so inconvenient a time as Lent. I wrote to her then to wait for the true Spring, and to come in a litter, so that if one of her sisters wishes to accompany her, she may be able to do so without the dread of having to come on horseback. I send the one book for her, the other for Mademoiselle de Traves, according to your desire. The Father de Mandi asked me for one : if you give him the one you have, I will give you a better one here ; besides, we must console him. I should like to send some to several persons ; but I assure you that only thirty altogether have come into this country, and I have not been able to supply a tenth part of those to whom I ought to give them. It is true that I am not in very great trouble about it, because I know that there are more yonder than here. Still I thought I ought to send one to M. de Chantal, and that he would be offended if I did not ; so here it is.

What more have I to say to you, my dear child ? A thousand things, but I have not leisure for them, as I want Claude to start without any more waiting. Only be sure that I am quite full of joy and satisfac-

tion because your Groissy\* speaks not only with respect, but with quite an affectionate love of you and your two fathers, and, which pleases me most, of my dear little Aimée. I tell you the truth, he could not give me more pleasure than by this, and truly I hope that all will go on very well, and that there will remain no subject of discontent to anyone.

Do not be sorry for having written to me about the twelve-hundred francs ; for you must not be sorry for anything which occurs with me.

Well then, I shall see plenty of miseries, and we will talk of them, I hope, as much as we like.

My mother wants you to make your little rest at Sales, where she will await you to accompany you here ; but do not think that I will leave you there without me : no, certainly not, for either I will wait for you there, or I will be there as soon as I know you are. I do not write to your good old attendant (*commère*), for I shall have leisure to entertain her fully : and I confess that you have given me much pleasure by putting her in your train, although for her I shall perhaps have to put myself to expense, in order that on her return she may give a good account of my magnificence. You see I am already laughing in my heart at the expectation of your arrival.

\* A brother of St. Francis.

LETTER XI.

TO MADAME DE CORNILLON, HIS SISTER.

*On the death of their mother.*

*4th March, 1610.*

MY DEAREST SISTER, MY CHILD,—Let us console ourselves as best we can in this departure of our good mother ; for the graces which God has employed, in her regard, to prepare her for so happy an end, are very certain marks that her soul is sweetly received into the arms of his Divine mercy, and that it is blessed by being delivered and disentangled from the burdens of this world. And we also, dear sister, shall be blessed in our turn, if, like her, we live the rest of our days in the fear and love of our Lord, as we promised one another that day at Annecy.

His Divine Majesty attracts us thus to the desire of heaven, drawing thither, little by little, all that was dearest to us here below. Be then quite consoled, my dear child ; and if your heart cannot help feeling pain at this separation, moderate it at least so far by the acquiescence we owe to the good pleasure of our Saviour, that his goodness may not be offended, nor the fruit which he has placed in your womb be badly affected.

And I must add this word for your contentment : this poor good mother, before quitting Annecy, revised all the state of her conscience, renewed all the good

resolutions she had made of serving God, and became so contented with me that more could not be; for God did not will that she should be in a state of melancholy, when he took her to himself. So then, my dear sister, my child, always love me well; for I am more yours than ever; and may it please God that you may be able to come and spend the Holy Week with us! I should end it very much consoled. Good-day, my child, I am your brother, &c.

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LETTER XII.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*On the death of his mother, and her last moments.*

11th March, 1610.

BUT, O my God, must we not, my dearest child, in all and everywhere adore this supreme Providence, whose counsels are holy, good, and most loveable? And here has it pleased him to withdraw from this world our best and dearest mother, to hold her, as I believe most assuredly, in his own presence and in 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 *his judgment is right,†* his will is always *good,‡* and his ordinances most amiable.

\* Ps. cxxxv.

† Ps. cxviii. 137.

‡ Rom. xii. 2.

And as for me, I confess, my child, that I feel a great pain in this separation, for this is the confession I ought to make of my own weakness, after making that of the divine goodness. But still, my child, it has been a tranquil pain, though sharp; for I have said with David: *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth because thou hast done it.\** Without doubt, if it had not been so, I should have cried “*stop,*” under this blow, but I do not feel that I should dare to cry out, or to express unwillingness under the strokes of this paternal hand, which, in truth, thanks to his goodness, I have learnt to love tenderly from my youth.

But you would perhaps like to know how this good woman ended her days. Here is a little account of it; for it is to you I speak; to you, I say, to whom I have given the place of this mother in my *memento* at Mass, without taking from you the place you had. I could not do it, so firmly do you hold what you hold in my heart, and thus you are there first and last.

This mother, then, came here this winter; and, during the month she stayed, she made a general review of her soul, and renewed her desires of living well with very much affection, and went away entirely contented with me, having got from me, as she said, more consolation than she had ever done. She continued in this state of joy till Ash Wednesday, when

\* Ps. xxxviii. 10.

she went to the parish church of Thorens, where she confessed and communicated with great devotion, and heard three Masses and Vespers. In the evening, being in bed, and not being able to sleep, she had read to her by her maid three chapters of the *Introduction*, to entertain herself with good thoughts, and had the *Protestation* marked to make it next morning; but God was satisfied with her good will, and arranged in another way; for when morning came, and this good lady was getting up and having her hair done, she was taken suddenly with an effusion on the chest (*catarrhe*), and fell as if dead.

My poor brother, your son, who was still asleep, runs in as soon as he is told of it, in his night-dress, and lifts her up and walks her about and helps her with essences, imperial-waters, and other things which are judged proper in such accidents, so that she awakens up and begins to speak, but almost unintelligibly, as the throat and the tongue were affected.

They come here to call me; and I go instantly with the doctor and the apothecary, who find her in a lethargy, and paralysed in half her body; but lethargic in such sort that she was still easy to rouse up; and in these moments of entire consciousness, she showed perfect clearness of mind, either by the words she tried to say, or by the movement of her good hand, that is, the hand of which she still had the use: for she spoke very appositely of God and her soul, and took the cross herself, feeling for it (because she on a sudden became blind) and kissed it. She



took nothing without making the sign of the cross over it, and so she received the Holy Oil.

On my arrival, all blind and drowsy as she was, she embraced me tenderly, and said: "It is my son and my father, this;" and kissed me, clasping me with her arm, and kissed my hand before anything else. She remained in the same state nearly two days and a half, after which we could not properly rouse her, and on the 1st of March she yielded her soul to our Lord, gently and peaceably, and with a dignity and beauty greater than perhaps she ever had, remaining one of the loveliest dead I have ever seen.

For the rest, I must also tell you that I had the courage to give her the Last Blessing, to close her eyes and her mouth, and to give her the last kiss of peace at the instant of her departure; after which my heart swelled greatly, and I wept over this good mother more than ever I have done since I have been in the Church; but it was without spiritual bitterness, thank God. This is all that happened.

But I cannot help declaring the excellently good disposition of your son,\* who has so extremely obliged me by the care and pains he has taken for this mother: and with such heart that I say if he had been some stranger, I should be forced to hold him and swear him (*le jurer*) for my brother. I know not whether I am mistaken, but I find him very greatly changed for

\* The Baron de Thorens, brother of St. Francis, and son-in-law of Madame de Chantal.

the better, both as to the world, and principally as to his soul.

Well then, my dear child, we must make our resolution about this, and ever praise God, even if it pleased him to visit us even more heavily. And now, if you find it suitable, you will come here for Palm Sunday; I say here, because it is not right that you should spend the good days in the country. Your little room will expect you; our little table, and our little and simple fare will be prepared and offered with good heart, I mean with my heart, which is entirely yours. . . . .

Now I run over the chief points of your letter. Our poor little Charlotte is happy in leaving the earth before she has properly touched it. Alas! we must still weep a little over it; for have we not a human heart, and a sensitive nature? Why not weep a little over our departed, since the Spirit of God not only allows it, but invites us to it. I have regretted her, the poor little child, but with a less sensible grief, because the great feeling of the separation from my mother took away almost all the sting from the feeling of this second pain, the news of which arrived whilst we still had my mother's body in the house. May God be praised also in this matter. God giveth, God taketh away, may his holy name be blessed.

LETTER XIII.

TO MADAME DE CORNILLON, HIS SISTER.

*The Saint consoles her on the death of M. the Baron de Thorens, their brother.*

*After 27th May, 1617.*

O God! my poor dearest sister, how troubled I am for the pain which your heart will suffer in the decease of this poor brother, who was so dear to all of us! But there is no cure: we must stay our wills in that of God, who, if we well consider everything, has greatly favoured this poor deceased, in having taken him away from an age and a vocation in which there is so much danger of damnation.

As for me, my dear child, I have wept more than once on this occasion; for I tenderly loved this brother, and could not help having the feelings of pain which nature caused me. But now I am quite firm and comforted, having learnt how devoutly he departed in the arms of our Barnabite Father, and of our *Chevalier*,\* after having made his general Confession, been reconciled three times, received Communion and Extreme Unction very piously.

What better can we wish him according to the soul? And according to the body, he has been assisted so far that nothing has been wanting to him.

Monseigneur the Cardinal-Prince, and Madame,

\* Janus de Sales, Knight of Malta.

the Princess, sent to visit him, and the ladies of the Court sent him presents of things to eat, and in fine Monseigneur the Cardinal, after his departure, sent twelve torches, with the arms of His Highness, to honour his funeral.

May God then be for ever blessed, for the care he has taken to gather this soul in amongst his elect: for, after all, what else can we aim at.

It cannot be expressed what virtue the poor little widow has shown on this occasion! We shall keep her here (at the Visitation) some days longer, until she is entirely restored. Never was man more generally regretted than this one. So then, my dearest child, let us console our hearts the best way we can, and think good all it has pleased God to do: for, indeed, all he has done is very good.

I make this letter common to my dearest brother (in-law) and you, in the hope of seeing you soon. May God for ever bless your heart, my dearest sister, my child, and I am without end most perfectly all yours, and your, &c.

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#### LETTER XIV.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL.

*Perfect resignation of the Saint.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—You will see in the letter of this good Father my pain. It has, indeed, a little

touched me, but the news having come during the feeling which I had of a total resignation to the conduct of divine Providence, I said nothing in my heart, except : Yes, heavenly *Father*, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.\* And this morning, at my first awaking, I experienced such a strong impression of a desire to live altogether according to the spirit of faith, and the highest part of the soul, that, in spite of soul and heart, I willed whatever God willed, and I will that which is for his greater service, without reserve, and without sensible or spiritual consolation ; and I pray God never to let me change my resolution.

I have had since Easter perpetual inconveniences, but I saw no remedy, and also no danger ; they are altogether gone ; thanks to God, whom I beseech to send them back to me, when he pleases.

A thousand most loving salutations to your dear soul, my dearest mother, to whom God has given me after an incomparable manner.

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L E T T E R XV.

TO THE SAME.

*Profound peace of the Saint amidst his affairs. Mark of his humility. He permits ladies some innocent recreations, under the name of balls. He announces that he is going to work at the Treatise on the Love of God.*

No, my dearest child, I have had no news of you these three whole months ; and, indeed, I cannot believe that

\* Matt. xi. 26.

you have sent me any. The longer the news delays, the more I wish it good. I confess that my heart importunes me a little in this regard; but I pardon it these little ardours, for it is paternal, and more than paternal. Will you really believe what I am going to tell you? I received, some time ago, the little book, on *The Presence of God*; it is a little work, but I have not yet been able to read it through, to tell you what I think of it for your service. It is incredible how I am hustled hither and thither by affairs; but, my dear child, you will distress yourself if I do not add that still, thanks to my God, my poor and weakly heart never had more repose, nor will to love his Divine Majesty, whose special assistance I feel for this purpose.

O my dearest child! what great pleasure you gave me one day on recommending to me holy humility! Do you know that when the wind gets into our valleys, amidst our mountains, it takes the bloom off the little flowers, but roots up the trees; and I, who am placed somewhat high in this charge of bishop, suffer the greater attacks. *O Lord, save us; command these winds of vanity and there will come a great calm.\** Keep yourself quite firm, and clasp very closely this foot of the sacred cross of our Lord; the rain which falls from all parts of it, calms down the wind, great as it may be. When I am there sometimes, O God, how is my soul at peace, and what sweetness does this dew, rosy and ruddy, give to it!

\* Matt. viii.

But I scarcely move one step away from it, and the wind begins again.

I do not know where you will be this Lent according to the body; according to the spirit I think you will be in the cavern of the turtle, and the pierced side of our dear Saviour: I fully mean to try to be often there with you; may God by his sovereign goodness give us the grace! Yesterday I seemed to see you, looking at the open side of our Saviour, and wishing to take his heart to put it into your own, as a king in a little kingdom; and though his is greater than yours, still he could make it little to accommodate it. How good is this Lord, my dear child! how amiable is his heart! let us stay there in that holy dwelling; let this heart live always in our heart, this blood seethe ever in the veins of our souls.

How pleased I am that we have cut the wings of Carnival (*Carême-prenant*) in this town, and that it scarcely knows itself! How I congratulated upon it, last Sunday, my dear people, who had come in extraordinary numbers to hear the evening sermon, and who had given up all amusement to come to me! I was greatly pleased that this was so, and that all our ladies had communicated in the morning, and that they did not dare to have balls without asking leave: and I am not hard with them:\* for I ought not to be, since they are so good, and so devout.

I am going to put my hand to the book of the *Love of God*, and will try to write as much on my heart as

\* See note p. 97.

on the paper. Be all to God ; I hope more every day in him, that we shall do much in our plan of life. My God, dearest child, how tenderly and ardently I feel the advantage and sacred tie of our holy unity ! I preached a sermon this morning all of flames, for I *felt* it ; I must say so to you. My God ! what blessings I wish you, and you cannot think how I am urged at the altar to recommend you more than ever to our Lord. What more have I to say to you, except that we should live with a life all dead, and die with a death all living and vivifying in the life and death of our king, of our flower, and our Saviour, in whom I am, your, &c.

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LETTER XVI.

TO THE SAME.

*On his soul.—The will.*

14<sup>th</sup> July, 1615.

THIS false esteem of ourselves, my dear child, is so favoured by self-love, that reason can do nothing against it. It is the fourth thing difficult to Solomon, and which he said was unknown to him—*the way of a man in his youth*.\* God gives M. N. much grace in his having his grandfather to watch over him. May he long enjoy this blessing.

\* Prov. xxx. 19.



O my child ! Be sure that my heart awaits the day of your consolation with as much ardour as yours. But wait, my dearest sister ; *wait with waiting*,\* to use the words of Scripture. Now, to wait with waiting is not to disquiet yourself in waiting ; for there are many who in waiting do not wait, but trouble and excite themselves.

We shall make way, dear child, God helping : and a great mass of little crosses and secret contradictions which have come upon my peace, give me the most sweet and delightful hope possible, and foretell, me seems, the near establishment of my soul in its God. He is, certainly, not only the great, but, as I think, the unique ambition and passion of my soul, in which I include that soul which God has inseparably joined with mine.

And as I am on the subject of my soul, I want to give you this good news of it, that I do and will do what you have asked me for it,—doubt not ; and I thank you for the zeal which you have for its good, which is not separate from the good of yours, if the words *yours* and *mine* can still be used between us on this point. I will say more to you : it is that I find my soul a little more to my satisfaction than usual, in having nothing which keeps it attached to this world, and being more sensible to eternal goods.

If I were as truly and strongly joined to God as I am absolutely detached from the world, — dear Saviour, how happy should I be ! And you, my

\* Ps. xxxix. 1.

child, how satisfied would you be? But I speak of the interior and my opinion (*sentiment*): for my exterior, and, what is worse, my conduct (*deportements*) are full of a great variety of contrary imperfections; and the good that I will I do not;\* but still I know well that in truth and without pretence I will it, and with an unalterable will.

But, my child, how can it be that with such a will, so many imperfections appear and spring up in me? Certainly, it is not of my will, nor by my will, though in my will and on my will. It is, I think, like the mistletoe, which grows and appears on a tree, and in a tree, though not of the tree, nor by the tree. O God! why do I tell you all this, save because my heart always opens forth and pours itself out without limits when it is with yours.

If you were staying where you are, I should be very glad to undertake the service which the Rev. Father N. desires of me for this lady: but as you are not, it seems to me that another, whom she will have a chance of seeing oftener, will make himself more useful for this good work; and meanwhile I will pray our Lord for her: for on the good news you give me of her, I begin to love her tenderly, poor woman. Ah! what a consolation to see this poor soul grow green again, after a winter so hard, so long, and so bitter. I am to you what God knows. Amen.

\* Rom. vii. 15.

LETTER XVII.

TO A LADY.

*He blames one of his spiritual daughters, who, in speaking of him, said extravagant things in his praise.*

22nd April, 1618.

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER OF MY HEART,—KNOW that I have a daughter, who tells me that my departure has caused her an agony of pain; that if she did not restrain her eyes they would shed as many tears as the sky rains drops of water, to lament my departure, and such fine words. But she goes very much farther; for she says that I am not a man, but some divinity sent to be loved and admired; and, she adds this notable speech that she would go to much greater extremes if she dared.

What are you saying, my dearest daughter: does it seem to you that she is not wrong to speak so? Are not these extravagant words? Nothing can excuse them except the love which she bears me, which is indeed quite holy, but expressed in worldly terms.

Now, tell her, my dearest child, that we must never attribute, in one fashion or another, Divinity to frail creatures; and that to think of even going further in praise is an improper thought; or at least to say it is to say improper words; that she must have more care to avoid vanity in words than in hair or dress; that for the future her language must be

plain and not frizzled (*frisé*). But still, tell it her so gently, amiably and holily, that she may take this reprimand well: it proceeds from my heart, which is more than paternal. This you know, being truly daughter most dear of my heart, and daughter in whom I have put full confidence. May God be for ever our love, my dearest daughter, and live in him and for him eternally. Amen.

*A few years earlier the Saint had spoken to Madame de Chantal on a similar occasion, as follows:*

My daughter, I am but vanity, and yet I do not esteem myself as much as you esteem me. I greatly wish you knew me properly; you would not cease to have an absolute confidence in me, but you would scarcely esteem me. You would say: he is a reed on which God wants me to lean: I am perfectly safe, because God wills it so; the reed, however, is good for nothing.

Yesterday, after having read your letter, I walked two turns, with my eyes full of tears, at seeing what I am, and what I am thought to be. I see then that you esteem me, and methinks this esteem gives you much satisfaction: that, my child, is an *idol*. Still, be not troubled about this; for God is not offended by sins of the understanding, although we are bound to keep from them if possible. Your strong affections will grow calmer every day by frequent actions of indifference.

LETTER XVIII.

TO A CURÉ OF THE DIOCESE OF GENEVA.

*He recommends to him the conversion of an heretical doctor  
who was treating Madame de Chantal.*

MONSIEUR, my dear *Confrère*, and my entire friend, I send this on the return of that poor doctor who has not been able to cure our mother, and whom I have not been able to cure. Ah! ought a son to kill the joy of his father's soul? With what good heart would our dear patient give her life for her doctor! And I, poor miserable shepherd, what would not I give for the salvation of this unhappy sheep! *Vive Dieu*, before whom I live and speak, I would give my skin to clothe him, my blood to salve his wounds, and my temporal life to save him from eternal death.

Why do I say this to you, my dear friend, save to encourage you, for fear the neighbouring wolves should break in upon your sheep, or to speak more paternally, according to the feelings of my soul, and this poor Genevois. Take care that no infected sheep hurts the dear and well-beloved flock! Watch carefully all round about this fold; and often tell them: *Let fraternal charity abide in you*;\* and above all pray to him who has said: *I am the good shepherd*,† that he may animate our care, our love, and our words.

\* Heb. xiii. 1.

† John x. 14.

I recommend to your sacrifices this poor sick doctor. Say three Masses for this intention, that he may be able to heal our mother and we may be able to heal him. She is very ill, this good mother, and my spirit is a little in trouble about her illness; I say a little and I mean much. I know, however, that if the Sovereign Architect of this new congregation wishes to take away the first foundation stone that he has laid, to put it in the holy Jerusalem, he well knows what he means to do with the rest of the building; in this knowledge, I remain in peace, and remain your, &c.

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LETTER XIX.

TO A FRIEND.

*He complains of not being able to give himself to study.*

12th September, 1613.

SIR,—I regret that you and Monsieur de N. are at Paris for so troublesome an occasion; but since there is no help, it behoves that you soften the pain by patience.

And as for me I am in a continual turmoil which the variety of the affairs of this diocese unceasingly produces, without a single day in which I can look at my poor books which I so loved once, and which I no longer dare to love now, for fear that the divorce

from them into which I have fallen might become more cruel and afflicting.

We have a little country where, just lately, has been re-established the power of the church by the king's authority, and according to the Edict of Nantes; but this restoration occupies me more in disputing with the ministers for the temporal goods of the church which they keep from us, than in persuading them or the people of the truth of the spiritual goods to which they should aspire; for it is a marvel how *these serpents stop their ears not to hear the voice of the charmers,\** how *wisely* and holily soever they charm.

There are there a sufficient number of very good pastors, and of good Capuchin Fathers, who not being heard by men are seen by God. He, without doubt, is quite contented with their present barrenness, which he will reward afterwards with a plentiful harvest, *and if they sow in tears they shall reap in joy.†* I have occupied you quite enough, sir, for the renewal of our intercourse, which I intend, God helping, to continue, and I intend not to cease recalling to your mind that I am invariably, sir, your, &c.

\* Ps. lvii. 5.

† Ps. cxxv. 5.

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## LETTER XX.

TO AN ECCLESIASTIC.

*On friendship.*

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—The question you ask me is this: Will not your heart love mine truly, and always, and in all occurrences? and my answer is: O my dearest brother! It is a maxim of three great lovers, all three saints, all three doctors of the church, all three great friends, all three great masters of moral theology, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine: *Amicitia quæ desinere potuit nunquam vera fuit.*\* There, my dear brother, there is the sacred oracle which announces to you the invariable law of the eternity of our friendship, since it is holy and not feigned (*sainte et non feinte*), founded on verity and not on vanity, on the communication of spiritual goods and not on the interest or commerce of temporal goods. To love truly and to cease loving are two incompatible things.

The friendships of the children of the world are of the nature of the world; the world passes, and all its friendships pass; but ours is of God, in God, and for God: *Thou art always the self-same, and thy years shall not fail.*† The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof: Christ passeth not away, nor his dilection. Infallible conclusion.

\* Friendship which could end was never true.

† Ps. ci. 28.



Your dear sister writes ever to me with so much outpouring of her dear love that truly she deprives me of the power of thanking her properly. I say the same of you, begging you to thank one another for the satisfaction you give me.

For the rest, I send then the portrait of this terrestrial man, so entirely am I without the power to refuse anything to your desire.

I am told that I have never been well painted, and I think it matters little. *Mun passeth as an image; yea, and he is disquieted in vain.\** I have borrowed it to give to you, for I have none of my own. Alas! if that of my Creator were in its lustre in my soul, with what good will would you look upon it! *O Jesu! tuo lumine, tuo redemptos sanguine sacra, refove, perfice, tibi conformes effice. Amen.*

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## LETTER XXI.

TO MADAME DE CHANTAL, AT PARIS.

*The Saint expresses his disgust for the court, and for the condition of a courtier.*

29<sup>th</sup> December, 1619.

I ASSURE you, my best and dearest mother, that the sight of the grandeur of the world makes the grandeur of Christian virtues appear grander to me, and makes

\* Ps. xxxviii. 7.

me more highly esteem its contempt. What a difference, my dearest mother, between the assemblage of various suitors (*pretendants*)—for the court is this and nothing but this—and the assemblage of religious souls, who have no pretensions save for heaven. Oh! if we knew in what consists true good!

Do not believe, my dearest mother, that any favour of the court can attach me. O God! how much more desirable a thing is it to be poor in the house of God, than to dwell in the palaces of kings. I am here making my novitiate for the court, but I will never make my profession in it, God helping. On Christmas Eve I preached before the Queen at the Capuchins, where she made her communion; but I assure you that I preached neither better nor more willingly before all the princes and princesses, than I do in our poor little Visitation at Annecy.

O God! my dearest mother, we must put our heart entirely in God, and never take it from him. He alone is our peace, our consolation, and our glory: what remains for us but to unite ourselves more and more to this Saviour, *that we may bring forth good fruit*? Are we not blessed, my dearest mother, in being able to graft our stock on that of the Saviour, who is grafted on the Divinity? For this sovereign essence is the root of that tree, whose branches we are, and whose fruit our love is: this was my subject this morning.

Courage, my uniquely dear mother, let us not cease to throw our hearts into God: they are the perfume-

balls which he loves to compound; let us allow him to make them as he likes. Yes, Lord Jesus, do all at your will with our hearts; for we wish neither part nor portion therein, but give, consecrate, and sacrifice them to you for ever. So then, remain always in perfect peace in the arms of our Saviour who loves us dearly, and whose holy love ought alone to serve as our general *rendezvous* for all our conversations: this holy love, my mother, in which ours is founded, enrooted, grows and is fed, will be eternally perfect and lasting. I salute our sisters affectionately. I am grieved that our Sister N. has the fancy of changing houses. When shall we not wish anything, but entirely leave solicitude to those whose duty it is to will for us what is needed? But it cannot be helped: our own will is bridled by obedience, and still we cannot keep it from rearing up, and prancing. We must bear the infirmity. Much time elapses before we become entirely despoiled of ourselves, and of the pretended right of judging what is best for us and desiring it. I admire the little Infant of Bethlehem, who knew so much, who had such power, and who, without saying a word, let himself be handled, and bound, and fastened, and wrapt up as required. May God ever be in in the midst of your heart and mine, my dearest mother.

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## LETTER XXII.

TO THE SAME.

*Disinterestedness of the Saint.*

11th May, 1620.

WELL, MY MOTHER,—I am in your parlour, where I have had to come to write these four or five letters which I send you. I must then tell you that I cannot think anything should be done in the matter you know of,\* if God does not wish it with his absolute will; for, firstly, there was what I said immediately to Monsieur the Cardinal, namely, that if I left my wife (his see) it would be to have no more. I manage to get on, though with great difficulty, and to bear the burdens of my present see, with which I have grown old; but with one quite new to me, what should I do? The will of God alone, manifested by my superior, the Pope, can draw me from this path.

2. My brother then is bishop:† that does not enrich me, it is true; but it relieves me, and gives me some hope of being able to get out of the crowd. That is worth more than a cardinal's hat.

3. But your nephews will be poor? My mother, I consider that they are already less so than when they were born; for they were born naked: and besides, two or three thousand crowns, or even four, would not give me enough to help them without lowering the

\* The Coadjutorship of Paris.

† Coadjutor to the Saint.

reputation of a prelacy, and in which are required so many alms, pious works, just and necessary expenses.

4. Here is His Highness who tells me that he absolutely insists on my accompanying Monseigneur the Cardinal, his son, to Rome: and, in fact, it will be useful even for the service of the Church that I should make this journey: though in good truth, my mother, it is not according to my inclination. After all, it is ever *going*, and I like to rest, and it is going to court, and I like simplicity. But there is no help; as it must be, I will do it, and with good-will, and meantime the thoughts of that great prelate yonder will have leisure to melt away. Let us then speak no more of it except according to occurrences, my mother.

I am for ever, without reserve and without comparison, that is, beyond all comparison, yours, and certainly, as you know very well yourself, I am yours very perfectly.

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## LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

*Acquiescence of the Saint in the Divine Will.*

MY DEAREST MOTHER,—These few words go, by an unexpected opportunity, to salute your dear soul, which I cherish as mine own: and such it is, in him who is the principle of all unity and union.

I cannot deny that I am grieved about your fever ; but do not pain yourself about my pain, for you know me. I am a man to suffer, without suffering, all it will please God to do with you as with me. Ah ! we must make no reply nor reflection.

I confess before Heaven and the angels that you are precious to me as myself ; but this takes not from me the most determined resolution to acquiesce fully in the Divine will. We wish to serve God in this world, anywhere, with all that we are : if He judge it better that we should be in this world, or in the other, or in both, His most holy will be done, since I am inseparable from your soul ; and to speak with the Holy Spirit, we have henceforward but one heart and one soul : for what is said of all the Christians of the early Church, is found, thanks to God, in us.

I will say no more save that I am better, and my heart goes better than it has done for a long time ; but I know not whether the consolation comes from natural causes or from grace.

May God ever be in the midst of your heart, to fill it with His holy love ! Amen. *Vive Jésus*, my dearest Mother, I am as you know yourself, evermore entirely yours.

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LETTER XXIV.

TO M. FAVRE.

*The thought of eternity.*

MY BROTHER,—I finish this year with the satisfaction of being able to present you the wish I make you for the following.

They pass then away, these temporal years, my brother; their months melt into weeks, weeks into days, days into hours, and hours into moments, which last are all we possess: and these we only possess as they perish and make up our perishable life. This life, however must on this account be more dear to us, since being full of misery, we cannot have any more solid consolation therein than that of being assured that it gradually disappears to make room for that holy eternity which is prepared for us in the abundance of God's mercy. To this eternity our soul aspires incessantly by the continual thoughts its very nature suggests to it, though it cannot have hope for eternity except by other and higher thoughts which the author of nature bestows upon it.

Truly, my brother, I never think of eternity without much sweetness; for, say I, how could my soul extend its thought to this infinity unless it has some kind of proportion with it? Certainly, a faculty which attains an object must have some sort of correspondence with it. But when I find that my desire

runs after my thought upon this same eternity, my joy takes an unparalleled increase, for I know that we never desire, with a true desire, anything which is not possible. My desire then assures me that I can have eternity: what remains for me but to hope that I shall have it? And this is given to me by the knowledge of the infinite goodness of him who would not have created a soul capable of thinking of and tending towards eternity, unless he has intended to give the means of attaining it. Thus, my brother, we shall find ourselves at the foot of the crucifix, which is the ladder by which from these temporal years we pass to the eternal years.

I wish then about your dear soul that this next year may be followed by many others, and that all may be usefully employed for the conquest of eternity. Live long, holily, and happily amongst your own here below during these perishable moments, to live again eternally in that unchangeable felicity for which we pant. See how my heart pours itself out before yours, and expresses itself according to that confidence which is given it by the affection which makes me yours, &c.

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LETTER XXV.

TO A LADY.

*Contempt of the grandeurs of this world.—Desires of Eternity.*

*Lyons, 19th December, 1622.*

A THOUSAND THANKS to your well-beloved heart, my dearest daughter, for the favours it does to my soul, in giving it such sweet proofs of its affection. My God! How blessed are they who, with hearts disengaged from courts and from the forms which reign there, live peacefully in holy solitude at the foot of the crucifix. Truly, I never had a good opinion of vanity, but I find it much more vain amid the feeble grandeurs of the court.

My dearest daughter, the more I advance in this mortality, the more contemptible I find it, and ever more loveable the holy eternity to which we aspire, and for which only we must love one another. Let us live only for this eternal life, which alone deserves the name of life, in comparison with which the life of the great of this world is a very miserable death.

I am with all my heart very truly all yours, my dearest daughter. Your, &c.

THE END.



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Francis, de Sales,  
Saint, 1567-1622.

Letters to persons in  
the world /

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