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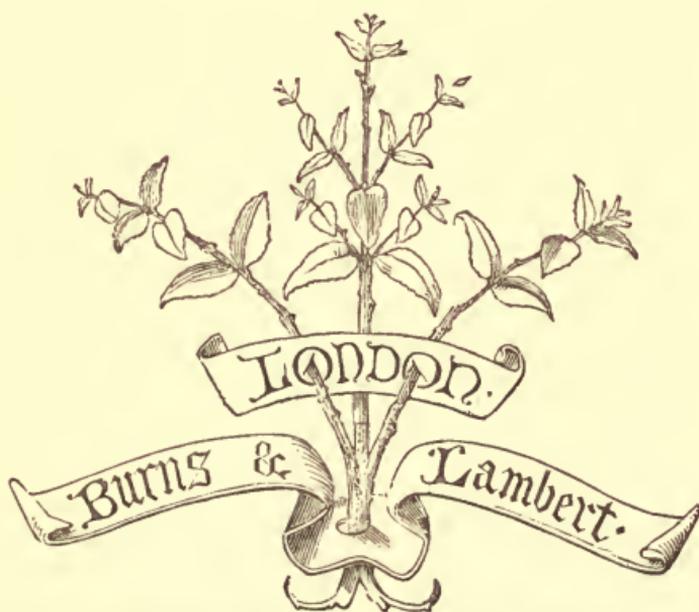


**P**ractical **D**iety

Set forth by

St. Francis de Sales,

Bishop of Geneva.



Imprimatur.

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# PRACTICAL PIETY

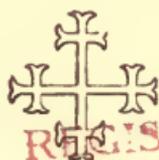
SET FORTH BY

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES,

BISHOP AND PRINCE OF GENEVA.

COLLECTED FROM HIS LETTERS AND DISCOURSES,

And now first translated into English.



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# PREFACE

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**S**T. FRANCIS DE SALES was born on August 21, 1567, at the Castle of Sales, near Annecy, the seat of the ancient and noble family of that name, to which he belonged. His father was Francis Count of Sales, and his mother, who was also descended from a noble stock, Frances de Sionas. The history of his infancy is pleasing and beautiful. Before his birth, the holy countess his mother offered the fruit of her womb to God, and prayed fervently that He would rather deprive her of the happiness of seeing herself a mother, than that her child should hereafter become an enemy of God. Her prayers were heard; for the young Francis, even from his earliest years, shewed an extraordinary goodness and sweetness of disposition. He loved God as soon as he began to know Him; and it is said that the first words which he uttered were, "God and my mother love me well." The countess took great pains to bring up her son in innocence and holiness, and he did not disappoint her watchful care. He loved to read holy books, to be often in church, to visit the poor, and to deny himself food as far as he was able, in order to bestow it on them. His capacity for learning was no less remarkable; and on his arriving at the proper age he was sent to the college of Annecy. He there applied himself with great diligence to his studies, without, however, at all relaxing his zeal for devotion. He very early wished to consecrate himself to Almighty God in the ecclesiastical state, and with the consent of his father he received the tonsure in 1578, at the age of twelve years.

Some time afterwards his parents sent him to the University of Paris, where he went through a course of rhetoric and philosophy at the schools of the Jesuits, and also studied theology, partly there and partly at the Sorbonne. His principal teacher was the celebrated Maldonatus, and he studied

the learned languages under Genebrard, with a view chiefly to a more profound acquaintance with the sacred Scriptures. He made great proficiency in all his studies, and advanced no less in the path of perfection, on which he had entered from his earliest years. Among the religious books which he most prized, the *Spiritual Combat* is mentioned as his chief favourite. This admirable book he always carried about with him, and read a chapter, or at least a page or two in it, every day. He frequented the churches constantly, and indeed was never seen abroad except going to or from church and college. The church to which he was fondest of resorting was that of St. Etienne-des-Grès, as being very retired; and it was in that church that, prostrated before an image of the Blessed Virgin, he made a vow of perpetual chastity, placing himself under the special patronage of our Holy Mother.

About this period of his life, at the age of sixteen, it pleased God to allow the saint to be visited with an extraordinary temptation, doubtless intended to purify his heart, and give him wisdom in after years, to comfort others in like desolation. The holy youth was suddenly overwhelmed with the idea that he was doomed to be eternally lost. "This temptation," says his devout biographer, the Bishop of Belley, "made such an impression on his soul that he lost all peace of mind, and could neither eat nor drink. He visibly wasted away, and fell sick, whilst he could not be induced to tell any one the cause of his grief. He was at the same time deprived of all the sweetness of divine love, though not of the fidelity with which, as an impenetrable shield, he unconsciously endeavoured to repel the fiery darts of the enemy. The consolation and calm which he had enjoyed before this storm, came back to his memory, and redoubled his anguish. It was, then, in vain, he would say to himself, that blessed hope which fed me with the expectation of being inebriated with the abundance of the sweetness of the house of God, and drowned in the torrents of His pleasures. O lovely tabernacles of the house of God, I shall, then, never see you, and never dwell in those beautiful abodes of the palace of the Lord!

"He remained an entire month in this anguish and bitterness of soul, which he could compare to nothing but the pains of death and the terrors of hell. He passed his days in mournful groans, and every night he watered his couch with his tears.

"At last, having by a divine inspiration entered into a church (that of Etienne-des-Grès), to implore the grace of God on his misery, and kneeling down before a picture of the holy

Virgin, he besought that Mother of Mercy to be his advocate with God, and of her goodness to obtain from Him, that if he were unhappy enough to be separated from Him eternally, he might at least love Him with all his heart during his life. He recited the prayer, 'Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary,' &c., with floods of tears and inexpressible sorrow of heart. He had no sooner finished this prayer than he felt the effect of the succour of the Mother of God, and the power of her assistance with God; for in an instant that demon which had filled his mind with these sad illusions left him, and he remained filled with such joy and consolation, that where darkness had abounded, light much more abounded.

"This combat and this victory, this captivity and this deliverance, rendered him afterwards so skilful in the use of spiritual weapons, that he was, as it were, an armoury for others; furnishing all who revealed their temptations to him with means of defence; being unto them, like that tower of David on which hung a thousand bucklers, all the armour of valiant men. Above all, he advised that in great temptations we should have recourse to the powerful intercession of the Mother of God, who is terrible as an army set in array."

After having spent a sufficient time at Paris, his father sent him to the University of Padua, where he studied the law under the celebrated Guy Pancirola, and theology under the learned Jesuit Possevinus. The "rule of life" which he drew up for himself at this time is still preserved, and is full of interest and value for all, but especially for the young student at that dangerous period of life. One of the most interesting passages in this paper is the first, headed, "The Preparation for the Day," an exercise which the saint expresses his resolution to be very faithful in practising daily. This preparation he makes to consist, (1) in calling upon Almighty God to assist him in all the dangers to which he may be exposed; (2) in imagining beforehand all the circumstances of the day, the society, the affairs in which he may have to be engaged, and thus, by the grace of our Lord, anticipating any occasions that might throw him off his guard; (3) in arranging the day, considering carefully the best means of avoiding any wrong steps, and determining what he ought to do, to say, to seek, or to avoid; (4) in resolving firmly never more to offend God, and particularly on this day; (5) lastly, in recommending himself, and whatever depends on him, absolutely into the hands of God, seeking only to do His will. There are also some admirable rules for mental prayer, and some observations, full of wisdom and that character of excellent good sense which dis-

tinguished this great saint, on the deponent he proposed to himself in society. He resolves never to miss hearing Mass every day, and to confess and communicate at least once a-week. His austerities at this time were so great that he fell dangerously ill, but, however, happily recovered, and terminated his residence at Padua by taking the degree of doctor in laws, with the great applause of that learned university. After this he travelled through great part of Italy, going to Rome to venerate the tomb of the holy Apostles; and from thence to Loretto, at which august shrine he renewed his vow of continence under the patronage of our Blessed Lady.

On his return home, all received the young nobleman with great joy. His father, who entertained lofty hopes of the distinctions he was to gain in the world, had obtained for him the important post of Counsellor of the Parliament of Chamberry, and had also a match in view for him suitable to his rank, and in every way worthy of him. Francis, however, declared his resolution of devoting himself to God in the ministry of His Church. The kind but ambitious father was induced with great difficulty to acquiesce; and at length the saint saw every obstacle removed, and he entered on the path in which Almighty God had destined him to exhibit so splendid an example of holiness. He was appointed by Peter de Granier, Bishop of Geneva, to the provostship of the cathedral church of Annecy, where the predecessors of that prelate had fixed the episcopal residence when the Calvinists had driven them out of Geneva. Francis de Sales entered on this dignity in 1593. The Bishop, immediately on his receiving the diaconate, employed him in preaching. He displayed extraordinary zeal in that office; and by the fervour and wisdom of his discourses he brought many thousands of souls into the fold of Christ. He never refused to preach when he was asked, always having in mind the maxims, "Give to him that asketh of thee," "Deal thy bread to the hungry;" and dreading that reproach, "The little ones asked for bread, and there was no man to break it unto them." His method was always to have some particular object in his sermons, such as the explanation of some point of the faith, or the inculcation of some virtue, and the like. He preferred rather to set forth the faith, as if he were instructing Catholics only, without controversially disputing against objectors; and by this means the heretics, who were very numerous in the diocese, were gently led to perceive that texts on which they relied to defend their errors, rightly understood, only proved the truths taught by the Catholic Church. He appears to have been slow and hesitating in his delivery; but the force of

his reasoning and the sweetness of his manner were incomparable, and were able to move the very rocks. After he had been raised to the priesthood, the Bishop of Geneva sent him on an arduous mission. This was to effect the restoration of the Catholic religion in the Duchy of Chablais, and other districts about the Lake of Geneva, of which the Calvinist heretics had been in possession for sixty years. In 1594, when he was sent into that province, he found only seven Catholics at Thonon, its capital. He laboured there for five or six years, aided by his cousin, Louis de Sales; and in the end brought over to Catholicity between 40,000 and 50,000 souls. His exertions seemed to meet with little success for the first four years; he lived in the midst of continual hostility; and sometimes his life was in danger from the fanatical Calvinists in those abodes of heresy; but his angelic sweetness and wisdom carried him through all. A pestilence which raged at Thonon enabled the servant of God to win the hearts of the people by his saintly charity, assisting the sick and dying at all hours, by day and night, and deterred by no fear of infection. The simplicity and gentleness with which he set forth Catholic truth gave him such power, that provided only a Protestant allowed him a quiet and peaceable hearing, he would make his objections disappear almost before they were stated. Even the heresiarch of Geneva, Theodore Beza, with whom, by order of Pope Clement VIII., our saint held conferences, was so much shaken by his words, that St. Francis conceived some hopes of his return to the holy Roman Church, which were frustrated by the death of the wretched man, which took place soon after.

In 1596 he effected the restoration of the church of St. Hippolytus at Thonon, in which he celebrated Mass on Christmas-day in that year, and considered it in future as his parish church. During the subsequent three years he gradually re-established the parochial system of the province. In reading the history of the wonders he effected, it is impossible for an English Catholic not to sigh over the records of his own country, or to resist the thought, what if it had pleased God to have sent us a St. Francis de Sales at some period ere the wild boar had utterly wasted the vineyard of the Lord! But at this moment, when the Catholic Church is addressing itself, undersuch happy and unlooked-for auspices, to reconquer whole populations to Christ, the history and writings of such a servant of God as St. Francis de Sales must be of the highest interest and advantage to all zealous missionaries and devout Catholics, who pray incessantly for the restoration of our Sion. As we shall presently see, the conversion of England was an

object of profound interest to this great saint, as it was to so many others, such as St. Philip Neri and V. Paul of the Cross.

The success of the mission in Chablais, which was witnessed by several distinguished persons, such as the Bishop of Geneva, Cardinal Medici, Apostolic Nuncio in France, and the Duke of Savoy, attracted universal attention to St. Francis, and ere long he was chosen by the Bishop of Geneva to be his coadjutor. On accepting this dignity he went to Rome to ask for the Papal benediction, where the Holy Father (Pope Clement VIII.) received him with singular honour; and after having questioned him concerning his charge, addressed to the holy prelate these words: "Go, my son, drink water out of thine own cistern, and the streams of thy own well; let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters." (Prov. v. 15.) In like manner, all the illustrious men in Rome at that time honoured his virtues; and it is mentioned that the great Cardinal Baronius said of him, that Adam had not sinned in that holy minister of Jesus Christ. He received of the Pope the Bulls for being consecrated Bishop of Nicopolis and coadjutor of Geneva, and returned to Annecy towards the end of 1599.

Some time after this, a war between France and Savoy terminated in the cession of the bailiwick of Gex to the former. As the Calvinist heresy was prevalent in that district, it became necessary for St. Francis to proceed to Paris to secure the interests of the Catholic religion with the king (Henry IV.); and this business he transacted with such sagacity and prudence, that he obtained from that prince all he wished in favour of the Catholics. The fame of St. Francis had, of course, gone before him to Paris, and he was received by all with the highest reverence. Henry IV. in vain tried to persuade him to accept a rich bishopric in his dominions. The holy Cardinal Bérulle obtained his advice in establishing the Congregation of the Oratorians, as also the Order of the Discalced Carmelites, in France. His sanctity and wisdom recommended him to whoever about the court regarded religion. The Duchesses of Mercœur and Longueville placed themselves under his direction. His sermons converted many of the most obstinate of the Calvinists; and, indeed, he never descended from the pulpit without being followed by numbers of persons desirous either of instruction or confession. He was a living example of the rule of the Apostle: "Be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient, with modesty admonishing them that resist the truth." (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.)

During his journey homeward from Paris he heard the news of the death of the Bishop of Geneva, and his own consequent elevation to that see. He retired to the château of Sales, where he prepared himself, by a retreat of twenty days, for his consecration, which took place on 8th December, 1602. He made a general confession, and constituted for himself a rule of life, to which he invariably adhered. In his house every thing was done as regularly as in a monastery. They rose, they attended prayer or went to Mass, they sat down to meals, they took recreation, they retired, at fixed hours. His table was frugal; he dressed in woollen only, using no silk or costly array. The furniture and arrangements of his house, though dignified, were perfectly plain. Every day he offered the holy Sacrifice; he said office on his knees. He was always present at the feasts of devotion kept in any of the churches of the town. On Sundays and holidays he attended his cathedral. Every year he made a retreat of ten days. The alms he gave were wonderful, considering the limited income of his see. He fasted every Friday and Saturday. He rose every day at four, and observed an exact economy of time. In his diocese he set himself to reform morals, by checking as far as possible the excess of public amusements. He ordered the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the Carnival; he ordered catechism to be given on Sundays and holidays throughout the year, and every day during Lent. He was very scrupulous to confer holy orders only on those thoroughly qualified; and he gave ecclesiastical preferments by an examination, so as to promote the most deserving. He instituted confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, to strengthen Catholics in the faith against the errors of Calvin. Among other confraternities established by St. Francis de Sales was that of the Penitents of the Holy Cross, and that of the Purity of the Blessed Virgin. Like St. Alphonsus Liguori, he was profoundly convinced of the blessings to be derived from such associations. He convoked a synod of his clergy, and revised a ritual for the administration of the sacraments. He diligently visited his diocese—a work full of difficulty, from its being a country of mountains and glaciers, and having a population ferocious and ignorant, and to a great extent hostile to the faith; but no dangers or difficulties ever checked the zeal and charity of the apostolic pastor. He arrested the devastations of Calvinism, not only in his own diocese, but at many other places; for example, Dijon and Grenoble, where he made glorious conquests for the Catholic faith, converting, amongst others, the Duke of Lesdiguières, viceroy of Dauphiny, and many ministers of the Cal-

vinist heresy. On one occasion he boldly passed through the city of Geneva, on his way to the Calvinist district of Gex, giving his name at the gate as the bishop of the diocese. Although the town was full of fanatics bearing deadly hate to Catholicity, he passed unhurt through the midst of them, protected by his saintly courage and zeal. On another occasion, the Calvinist ministers, enraged at his having converted two gentlemen of the household of the Duke of Bellegarde, governor of Gex, caused poison to be administered to him. Francis, however, by the miraculous protection of the Blessed Virgin, to whom he recommended himself, escaped this danger, after great sufferings. In the midst of all this, he not only found time to effect reforms in several monasteries, to establish at Annecy an ecclesiastical seminary and public schools of belles-lettres, philosophy, theology, and jurisprudence, but also to write numerous works, which have ever since been treasured by Catholics all over the world as replete with wisdom and holiness. Such was his "Advice to Confessors;" such his "Introduction to a Devout Life," known to almost every Catholic reader; such his Letters, from which, as from his other writings, choice extracts are given in the following collection, and of which Alban Butler says, that they contain "an inestimable treasure of moving instruction, suitable to all sorts of persons and circumstances." A copy of the "Introduction to a Devout Life" was sent by Mary of Medicis to James I. of England, who was delighted with the book, and asked his (the Anglican) bishops, how it was none of them could write with such feeling and unction? Jeremy Taylor, indeed, is largely indebted to St. Francis in his work entitled, "Holy Living and Dying;" but King James's question may still be asked, and receive no answer, except that Protestant writers may have learning, but cannot have the faith and charity to be found nowhere save in the Church. The heretic monarch was no less delighted with a subsequent work of St. Francis on "the Love of God," and even expressed a great wish to see the author; which being told St. Francis, he exclaimed: "Ah! who will give me the wings of a dove, and I will fly to the king, into that great island, formerly the country of saints, but now overwhelmed with the darkness of error. If the duke will permit me, I will arise and go to that great Ninive: I will speak to the king, and will announce to him, with the hazard of my life, the word of the Lord." The Duke of Savoy, of whom St. Francis was a subject, would not suffer the holy prelate to leave his dominions for this mission; and consequently the English king had not this yet greater grace given

him of conferring with the saint, whether it would have availed to his conversion or greater condemnation. The idea had apparently suggested itself to Henry IV. of France. We read in the Bull of Canonisation of St. Francis de Sales that the saint "had an admirable eloquence which it was impossible to resist, and this was in him less a natural talent, or one acquired by study, than a supernatural gift, and the fruit of the purity of his heart. Of this the world was so generally persuaded, that the most Christian king was accustomed to say, that he knew of no person so fitted as the coadjutor of Geneva to win the heart of James I. the king of England, and to bend that indocile spirit under the yoke of the Church."

In 1610, St. Francis de Sales founded the order of Nuns of the Visitation. He designed this institution for women who, either from their advanced age, their poverty, or their infirm health, might not be able to undertake the austerities of other orders, but who nevertheless were called to the religious life. To the direction of the Order much of the saint's time was subsequently devoted, and to it we owe a large proportion of his spiritual writings, as profitable to the secular as they are to the religious reader. The most valuable passages of them will in fact constitute a considerable part of the following pages. As very great bodily austerities, from the nature of the institution, were inadmissible in his plan, St. Francis wished that his religious should make up for them by continual slight mortifications, and by incessant denial of their wills. The two virtues of humility and meekness formed the basis of the rule. "In the practice of the virtues," he said, "let humility be the source of all the rest; let it be without bounds; make it the reigning principle of all your actions. Let an unalterable meekness and sweetness in all events by habit become natural to you." The first superioress of this order was the holy widow, St. Jane Frances de Chantal; and the formation of the character of that saint, as also the marking out for her the exalted career by which divine Providence intended to turn her wonderful holiness to the best advantage, may be said to be one of the greatest of the works of St. Francis de Sales. So abundantly did the Order of the Visitation receive the benedictions of the Lord, that in the year 1655, that of the canonisation of its holy founder, after it had been established only forty-five years, there were no less than one hundred and thirty houses of the institute in different parts of Europe.

It is beyond the purposes of this sketch to enter into any detailed history of the episcopate of St. Francis, though of no other saint are there more abundant or more interesting records.

His time was passed in indefatigable labours for the conversion of souls; in preaching, in writing, in the confessional, besides the frequent public missions which the secular power obliged him to undertake, from the universal reverence in which he was held for his wisdom and dignity. He was the adviser of all his people, of whatever rank, who resorted to him, denying access to no one. As a confessor, he was compared to a guardian angel, suggesting the holiest and wisest inspiration, or to the angel at the pool of Probatice, with strong hand enabling the feeble and sick to reach the healing waters. The great work of his disciple, the Bishop of Belley, entitled *L'Esprit du B. François de Sales*, gives a most elaborate picture of the daily life of the saint. The immense variety of his conversations and actions there recorded, shew him to have combined in an extraordinary degree prudence and simplicity, sweetness and strength. Every where you meet with a spirit of seraphic devotion, and every where also with the very perfection of good sense.

Among the important events of the later years of St. Francis' life was his accompanying the embassy of the Cardinal of Savoy to Paris, on occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Piedmont with Christina of France, sister to Louis XIII. This was in the year 1619. His time during that visit was consumed, as usual, in ceaseless apostolic labours, in preaching, hearing confessions, and in counselling the crowds who resorted to him to ask his advice, and hear the wisdom that flowed from his lips. Great efforts were again made to induce him to accept a bishopric in France; and Henry de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, then Bishop of Paris, used many arguments to persuade the saint to become his coadjutor in that See. In vain, however, did the Cardinal attempt to attract the zeal of the holy prelate, by representing to him the good he might do in the chief city of the kingdom. The saint excused himself, quoting playfully those words of the Apostle: "Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." (1 Cor. viii. 27.) He would not forsake his poor spouse, the bishopric of Geneva, for a rich one; and if he quitted her at all, it would be to take no other.

In 1622, when at Annecy, St. Francis de Sales received an order from the Duke of Savoy to attend him to Avignon, where that prince was to hold a conference with Louis XIII. The saint's health was failing, and though he considered it his duty to go, he felt that he should return no more. He therefore made his will, answered the questions of a vast number of people who came to consult him on the affairs of their con-

science, took farewell of his Nuns of the Visitation, and preached with extraordinary fervour. The whole city, overwhelmed with grief, accompanied him some miles on his journey, and received his last benediction.

From Avignon he attended the court of Savoy to Lyons, where he arrived seriously indisposed, but refused all the splendid apartments which were offered him, preferring to lodge in the poor cottage of the gardener of the monastery of the Visitation. For some days he preached and took part in various ceremonies as usual, though sinking fast. At length he was obliged to take to his bed, a seizure of the nature of apoplexy coming on. The rude surgery of the time applied the most barbarous remedies,—blisters, hot irons behind his neck, and a caustic to the crown of his head, which caused him the greatest agony, but which he bore with heavenly patience. Though shedding tears from the excessive pain, he kept repeating, “Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin. Still cleanse me more and more. What do I here, my God, separated from Thee?” He also consoled those around him, saying: “Weep not, my children; must not the will of God be done?” He received extreme unction, and on the evening of the Feast of the Holy Innocents, as they were reciting the Litany of the Saints, and had come to the petition, “Holy Innocents, pray for him,” he gave up unto God his pure and innocent soul, in the year of our Lord 1622, and in the fifty-fifth year of his age. His obsequies were celebrated with great pomp in the Cathedral of Annecy, and he was buried near the high altar in the church of the monastery of the Visitation in that city. Many miracles were wrought by his relics and intercession, and in 1665 he was canonised by Pope Alexander VII. The feast of St. Francis de Sales is on January 29.

It remains to say a few words respecting the selection from St. Francis de Sales' Letters and Discourses, now for the first time translated into English. Though originally addressed, for the most part, to religious, perhaps few manuals of devotional reading could be mentioned which are more admirably adapted to persons living in the world. There breathes throughout it such practical wisdom, such gentleness, such sweetness, and frequently what we may call such a majesty of holiness, which, whilst it enters into the difficulties and scruples of the weakest, furnishes food for those who are strongest, that we seem not so much to be reading the writings of a saint, as hearing his living voice addressed to ourselves. May his inter-

cession avail for all who read this book, either to strengthen them in the faith to which, by God's grace, they have already attained, or to lead them to the true fold, if they are still wandering outside of it!

R. O.

O God, by whose gracious will the blessed Francis thy Confessor and Bishop became all things unto all men for the saving of their souls; mercifully grant that, being filled with the sweetness of thy love, we may, through the guidance of his counsels, and by the aid of his merits, attain unto the joys of the life everlasting.

*Collect for the Feast of S. Francis de Sales.*



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# Spiritual Letters and Meditations

OF

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

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PART FIRST.

DUTIES TOWARDS GOD.

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CHAPTER I.

OF DIVINE LOVE.

It is true I am continually imploring that many graces may descend upon your soul ; but above all, and for the sake of all, do I ask for Divine love ; for therein is our all. It is our honey, in which, and by which, all the affections of our hearts should be preserved and sweetened. My God, how happy is the interior kingdom, when this holy love reigneth there ! How happy are the faculties of our soul, which obey a king so holy and so wise ! No, under His obedience, and in this state, He suffereth not great sins to dwell, nor even any affection for them. True, He allows them to approach nigh to the frontiers, in order to exercise the interior virtues in war, and to make them valiant ; and He suffers venial sins and imperfections, like spies, to run up and down in His kingdom : but

that is only to make us know that without Him we should be a prey to all our enemies.

Let us humble ourselves greatly; let us confess that if God be not our shield and buckler, we shall forthwith be pierced and transfixed with every kind of sins. For this reason, let us hold close unto God by persevering in our exercises: let this be our main care, and the rest only accessories to it.

For what remains, it is necessary always to have courage, and if any languor or feebleness of soul hangs about us, let us run to the foot of the cross, and place ourselves among those holy odours, among those celestial perfumes, and without doubt we shall thereby be fortified and refreshed.

Let us hold ourselves firm, and cling closely to that foot of our Lord's cross; the rain which falls there from every part quickly abates the storm, however great it be. Sometimes, when I am there, O God, how is my soul in peace, and what sweetness that celestial dew gives to it! But I have not stirred a step away from it, before the blast rises anew.

But notwithstanding the storm, let us be entirely in God's hands, without any reserve, or division, or exception, and without pretending to any thing but the glory of being His. If we had a single thread of affection in our heart, which was not at His service, and came not from Him, we would straightway pluck it out. Yes, if we knew of one single particle of our heart which was not marked with the print of the crucifix, we would not wish to keep it for one single moment.

Let us also conceal ourselves in the hole of the turtle-dove, and in the pierced side of our dear Saviour. How good is that Saviour! how loving is His heart! Let us remain there in that holy abode. Let that heart always live in our hearts; let that

blood always circulate in the veins of our souls. Let our love be all in God, and let God be in all our love. Oh, what need we have to desire that love, and what need we have to love that desire, since reason wills that we should desire to love for ever that which can never be loved enough, and that we should love to desire that which can never be desired enough.

## CHAPTER II.

OF THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING THE LOVE OF GOD, IN WHICH PERFECTION CONSISTS.

You ask me how one can acquire the love of God?

I reply, by willing to love Him; and, instead of setting yourself to think and ask how you can love Him, setting yourself to practise by a continual application of your soul to God; and you will arrive thither very much sooner by that road than by any other.

There are souls who employ themselves so much in thinking how they shall do something, that they have not the time to do any thing; and yet, in whatever regards our perfection, which consists in the union of our soul with the Divine goodness, it is not so much a question of knowing as of doing much.

In my opinion, those of whom people ask the way to heaven have great reason to reply, as persons do jestingly, that to reach such and such a place, you must keep straightforward, and set one foot before the other. Keep straightforward, we should say to these souls anxious for their perfection; go in the path of your vocation with simplicity, applying yourselves rather to action than to aspiration: it is the shortest road.

But here is a subtilty that I must unfold to you;

and it is, that you would that I should tell you of some way of perfection ready-made, in such sort that you would only have to put it over your head, as one would a garment; and by that means might find yourself perfect without any trouble; that is to say, that I should give you perfection ready-made.

Oh, certainly, if that were in my power, I should be the most perfect man in the world; for if I could give perfection to others without their needing to do any thing, I assure you that I would take it in the first instance for myself. You seem to think that perfection is an art, and that if one could find out the secret of it, one would have it without any trouble. Certainly, we deceive ourselves; for there is no other, nor greater secret than to do and to labour faithfully in the exercise of Divine love, if we wish to unite ourselves unto the Beloved.

But I wish it to be observed, that when I say that we must *do*, I must always be understood to speak of the superior part of our soul; for as to all the repugnance of the inferior, we must trouble ourselves as little about that as passers-by do of the dogs which bark at a distance.

Those who, at a banquet, keep picking at every dish, and eating a little of every thing, derange their stomachs, and cause indigestion, which prevents their sleeping; so those souls who would taste of all the methods and all the means which conduct, or may conduct, to perfection, do likewise; for the stomach of their will, not having strength enough to digest and put in practice so many various means, a certain crudity and indigestion arises, which takes away from them their peace and tranquillity of spirit in our Lord, which is that one thing needful that Mary chose, and that shall not be taken from her.

## CHAPTER III.

## OF SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

Keep, I pray you, your heart exalted very high ; attach it indissolubly to the will of that most merciful and fatherly heart of our God. Let it for ever be obeyed, and supremely obeyed, by our souls. So long as God wills that we are to be in the world for the love of Himself, remain there willingly and cheerfully.

Many go out of the world, who, for all that, do not go out of themselves ; seeking by that going out their taste, their ease, their contentment ; and these persons are marvellously eager after this going out ; for the self-love which urges them on is a turbulent, impetuous, and unruly love.

Let us not be of this class ; let us go out of the world to serve God, to follow God, to love God ; and in this frame of mind, so long as God wills that we serve, follow, and love Him in the world, we will remain there with a good heart ; for since it is only that holy service which we desire, in whatever place we perform it, we shall be contented.

Abide in peace ; do that well on account of which you remain in the world ; do it with a good heart, and be assured that God will esteem it of more worth at your hands, than if you went out of the world a hundred times to please your own will and inclination.

As to your other desire, it is a good one ; but, O my God, it is not worth your setting your heart upon. Let us recommend it to God ; let us do sweetly whatever can be done to attain success in it, as I shall do for my part. And if the eye of God, which penetrates the future, seeing perchance that this would not

turn out either to His glory, or as we intend it, we must not lose one hour's sleep for the sake of it.

The world will talk : what will people say ? All this is nothing to those who do not see the world but to despise it, and who look not upon time except in the light of eternity.

I will endeavour to keep the affair in progress, so that we may be able to see it completed ; for you do not desire it more than I do. But if it is not pleasing to God, it is not pleasing either to me or to you. Abide in peace, with a singular love of the Divine will and providence. Abide with our Saviour crucified planted in the midst of your heart.

I saw, awhile ago, a girl who was carrying a pail of water on her head, in the midst of which she had placed a piece of wood. I wished to know why she did this ; and she told me that it was to stop the motion of the water, for fear it might be spilt. So henceforth, said I, must we place the cross in the midst of our hearts, to stop the movements of our affections in that wood and by that wood, so that they may not be spilt out in disquietings, and in troubles of spirit.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

You ask me whether a soul, having the consciousness of her misery, can go to God with a great confidence ?

Now, I reply, that not only the soul which has the consciousness of her misery can have a great confidence in God, but that she cannot have a true confidence unless she has the knowledge of her misery ; for this knowledge, and this admission of our misery, introduces us to God.

Therefore all the great saints, such as Job, David,

and the others, began all their prayers with the confession of their misery ; so that a right good thing it is to be conscious that one is poor, vile, abject, unworthy to appear before God.

That proverb so famous among the ancients, *Know thyself*, at the same time that it applies to the greatness and excellence of the soul, that we should not abuse and profane it by things unworthy of its nobility, also applies to the knowledge of our own unworthiness, imperfection, and misery, that the more we feel ourselves to be miserable, the more we should trust in the goodness and mercy of God ; for between His mercy and our misery there is a bond so close, that the one cannot exercise itself without the other. If God had not created man, He still would have been truly all good, but He would not have been actually merciful, because mercy is only exercised towards the miserable.

You see, then, that the more we feel ourselves miserable, the more we have occasion to put our trust in God, since we have nothing to rest upon, to enable us to put our trust in ourselves.

Mistrust in ourselves arises from the knowledge of our imperfections. It is good to mistrust ourselves ; but how would it advantage us to do that were it not to throw all our confidence in God, and to wait on His mercy ? The faults and unfaithfulness which we daily commit ought to bring much confusion upon us when we would approach our Lord. Thus, we read that great souls, like St. Catherine or Sienna and St. Teresa, had these great confusions when they had fallen into some fault ; and it is very reasonable that, having offended God, we should retire awhile in humility, and remain confused. The same thing often happens to us when we have offended a friend ; we are ashamed to approach him.

But we must not stop there; for it would be no great thing, this annihilation and divesting one of self, which is done by acts of confusion, if it was not in order to throw ourselves wholly on God by confidence.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF THE EXERCISE OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

St. Paul teaches us the object of this divesting, where he says, *Put off the old man, and put on the new*; for we must not remain unclothed, but clothe ourselves anew in God. This little retirement is only made in order the better to throw ourselves upon God by an act of love and confidence, for our confusion ought not to be accompanied with sadness and disquiet: it is self-love which affords confusions of that kind; for we are troubled at not being perfect, not so much for the love of God, as for the love of ourselves.

And if you feel no such confidence, cease not, on that account, from making these acts, and from saying to our Lord, Yet, O Lord, though I have no feeling of confidence in Thee, I nevertheless know that Thou art my God, that I am all Thine, and that I have no hope but in Thy goodness; so I abandon myself wholly into Thy hands. It is always in our power to make these acts, and although we have difficulty in them, still there is no impossibility; and it is on these occasions, and in the midst of these difficulties, that we ought to testify faithfulness to our Lord. For even though we do these acts without sensible pleasure and without any satisfaction, we must not on that account vex ourselves, for our Lord loves them better so. And do not tell me that you say them, indeed, but that it is only with your lips; for if the heart willed it not, the lips would not

say a word. Having done so, remain in peace ; and, without attending to your disquietude, speak to our Lord of somewhat else.

It is, then, very good to have confusion, when we have the knowledge and the feeling of our own misery ; but we must not stop there, nor fall, for that reason, into discouragement, but must lift up our heart to God with a holy confidence, the foundation of which must be in Him and in ourselves, inasmuch as we change, and He never changes, but remains always as good and as merciful when we are feeble and imperfect, as when we are strong and perfect.

I am accustomed to say that the throne of God's mercy is our misery. In proportion, therefore, to the greatness of our misery ought to be the greatness of our confidence.

## CHAPTER VI.

### OF CONFIDENCE IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

You see how sweet the Providence of heaven is towards us, and that it delays not its succour, except to invite our confidence. That child will never perish who remains in the arms of a Father who is almighty. If our God grants us not always that which we ask of Him, it is to keep us near Him, and to give us occasion to urge Him, and to constrain Him with a loving violence, even as He made it apparent at Emmaus to the two disciples who were travelling, with whom He stayed not, except at the end of the journey, and very late, and when they constrained Him.

For the rest, He is gracious and kind : the moment that we humble ourselves under His will, He accommodates Himself to ours. Try, then, to fortify more

and more your confidence in this holy Providence, and frequently adore it in your spiritual retreats, and by interior regards.

Give into the hands of God's most secret Providence whatever you may find painful to you, and firmly believe that He will sweetly conduct you, your life, and all your affairs. Do you know what the shepherds in Arabia do when they behold it thunder and lighten, and the air is charged with sulphurous vapour? They retire under the laurel-trees, they and their flocks. When we see that persecutions or contradictions threaten us with some great trouble, we must retire, we and our affections, under the holy cross, with a true confidence that all will end to the advantage of those who love God.

Keep, then, your heart compact and settled; be much on your guard against eagerness; often cast your confidence on the Providence of our Lord, and be altogether sure that heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than the Lord be wanting to your protection, so long as you are His obedient child, or at least desirous to obey Him. Twice or thrice a-day look to see whether your heart is not disquieted about something; and if you find that it is, take care forthwith to restore it to calm.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OF THE ABANDONMENT OF ONESELF INTO THE HANDS OF PROVIDENCE.

It is necessary you should know, that to abandon one's soul, and to allow one's self, as it were, to drop out of one's own hands into God's, means nothing else but the parting with our own will to give it unto God; for it would be to little purpose our renouncing and surrendering ourselves, if this were not done in order to unite ourselves perfectly to the Divine goodness. To

do otherwise would be to resemble those philosophers who did in an extraordinary manner abandon themselves and all things for the sake of vain pretensions, and to devote themselves to philosophy. Epictetus was an instance of this, whose state of life being that of slavery, and his master wishing to emancipate him because of his great wisdom, he did not choose to have his liberty at the cost of renouncing his lofty contemplations; and he therefore remained a slave, and in such poverty, that, after his death, the only property found about him was a lamp, which was sold at a very high price, because it had belonged to so great a man.

As for us, we should not desire to abandon ourselves, if it were not to leave ourselves at the mercy of God's will. There are many who say to our Lord, I give myself unto Thee without any reserve; but there are very few who embrace the practice of this abandonment, which is nothing else but a perfect resignation to receive all sorts of events according as they occur by order of the Providence of God; affliction as well as consolation, sickness as well as health, poverty as well as riches, contempt as well as honour, disgrace as well as glory.

I mean this in reference to the superior part of our soul; for there is no doubt that inferior parts thereof, and our natural inclinations, always tend rather in the direction of honour than of contempt, of riches than of poverty; although every one knows that contempt and poverty are more agreeable to God than honour and abundance.

Now, in order to this abandonment, one must obey the expressed will of God, and that of His good pleasure. The expressed will of God includes His commandments, His counsels, His inspirations, and the rules and ordinances of our superiors.

The will of His good pleasure regards the issues of things which we cannot foresee ; for example, I know not if I am to die to-morrow. I perceive that it is the good pleasure of God that I die, and consequently I abandon myself to His good pleasure, and I die with a good heart. In like manner, I know not whether in the coming year all the fruits of the earth will not be spoilt by storms and tempests ; if it happens that they are so, or that a pestilence befalls us, or any similar events, it is evident that such is the good pleasure of God, and consequently I conform myself to it.

It may occur that you have no consolation in your religious exercises ; it is certain that such is the good pleasure of God, to which therefore we must conform ourselves ; and the same for all things that happen, excepting, however, sin and the loss of one's soul, to which we are never permitted to consent under the notion of conforming ourselves to God's will, which would be one of the grossest of delusions.

We must, moreover, observe, that there are things in which it is necessary to join the expressed will of God to that of His good pleasure ; for example, if I fall sick of a violent fever, I perceive in that event that the good pleasure of God is, that I remain in a state of indifference to health or sickness. But the expressed will of God is, that I who am not under obedience should call in the physician, and apply all the remedies I can ; I do not say those of the most costly kind, but such as are common and ordinary ; and that those who are under obedience should receive the remedies and treatment afforded them with simplicity and obedience ; for this God has declared to us by imparting to remedies their efficacy : the sacred Scriptures teach us this, and the Church orders it.

But this done, a soul perfectly abandoned to God

remains so indifferent whether the sickness prevails over the remedy, or the remedy prevails over the sickness, that if sickness and health were placed before her, and if our Lord said to her, "If thou choosest health, I will not for that reason take from thee one grain of My grace; if thou choosest sickness, in like manner, I will not enrich thee with one grain additional; but in the choice of sickness there is somewhat more of My good pleasure." Then the soul which is entirely abandoned into the hands of our Lord will without doubt choose sickness, merely because there is in it somewhat more of the good pleasure of God. Yes, even were it to follow that she should remain on a sick-bed all her life, without doing aught else but suffer, she would not for all the world could give desire any other state than that. Thus the saints who are in heaven have such a union with the will of God, that if there were somewhat more of His good pleasure in hell, they would quit Paradise to go thither.

This state includes also abandonment to the good pleasure of God in all those temptations, drynesses, aversions, and dislikes which occur in the spiritual life; for in all these things one sees the good pleasure of God, when they do not happen by our own fault, and do not imply any sin.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS ABANDONMENT.

This abandonment is the virtue of virtues; it is the cream of charity, the odour of humility, the reward, as I think, of patience, and the fruit of perseverance. Great is this virtue, and only worthy to be practised by the dearest children of God.

*Father*, said our sweet Saviour on the cross, *into Thy hands I commend my spirit* (St. Luke xxiii. 46).

It is true, He meant to say that it is consummated, and that *I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do* (St. John xix. 30 ; xvii. 4) ; but nevertheless, if it is Thy will that I remain still upon this cross to suffer yet more, I am content therewith ; I resign my spirit into Thy hands ; Thou canst do with it as it shall please Thee.

We ought to do the same on all occasions, whether it be that we suffer, or that we enjoy some contentment ; thus allowing the Divine will to lead us according to its good pleasure, without ever allowing ourselves to be engaged with our own particular will.

Our Lord loves with an extremely tender love those who thus abandon themselves totally to His fatherly care, allowing themselves to be governed by His good Providence, without considering whether the effects of that Providence will be sweet or bitter to them ; being entirely assured that nothing can possibly be sent to them from that fatherly heart which is not for their good and profit, provided they have put their whole confidence in Him, and say with a good heart, *My Father, I resign my spirit, my soul, my body, and all that I have into Thy hands, to do with them, in Thy love, whatever shall please Thee.*

Sometimes our Lord wills that souls chosen for the service of His Divine Majesty should nourish themselves with a firm and inviolable resolution of persevering to follow Him in the midst of disgusts, drynesses, dislikes, and bitternesses of the spiritual life, without consolations, favours, tendernesses or sweetnesses, and that they should believe themselves worthy of nothing else ; thus following the Divine Saviour with the fine point of the Spirit, without any thing to rest upon but his Divine will, which so wills it. And in this way I desire that we should walk.

For never shall we be reduced to such an extremity

as not to be able always to diffuse before the Divine Majesty the perfumes of a holy submission to His most holy will, and of a continual promise never to consent to offend Him.

## CHAPTER IX.

### OF THE EXERCISE OF THIS ABANDONMENT.

You ask me now with what a soul must interiorly occupy herself who is thus entirely abandoned into the hands of God? She has only to abide in peace near our Lord, without disquieting herself as to what will become of her; for our Lord, to whom she has abandoned herself, will take enough thought for that.

I do not, however, mean to say, that we must not think about the things to which we are obliged to attend, each according to his office. No; for it would not do that a superior, under the pretext of abandoning himself to God, and reposing himself on Him, should neglect to study and to learn the instructions proper to him in the exercise of his office.

It is very true that we must have a great confidence thus to abandon ourselves without reserve to Divine providence; but also, when we do entirely abandon ourselves, our Lord takes care of every thing, and conducts every thing. But if we reserve to ourselves any thing about which we have not confidence in Him, He leaves us; as though He said, You think yourself wise enough to manage this affair without Me; I allow you to guide it: you shall see what will come of it in the end.

St. Magdalene, who was entirely abandoned to our Lord, remained at His feet, and listened to Him as long as He spoke; and when He ceased to speak, she also ceased to hear, but she stirred not from His side: so does this soul, abandoned to our Lord, abide

within His arms, like an infant in its mother's bosom, who, when she puts him down to walk, walks till his mother again takes him up, and, when she would carry him, suffers her to do so. He knows not, and thinks not whither he is going, but he suffers himself to be carried or taken whither his mother pleases. Just in the same manner does this soul, loving the will of the good pleasure of God in all that happens to it, suffer itself to be carried, and nevertheless walks, doing with great care whatever belongs to the expressed will of God.

You said just now, that if it is really possible for our will to be so dead in our Lord, we should no longer know what we will or what we do not will.

But I answer, that it never happens, however abandoned to God we may be, that our liberty does not remain entire; whence there always reaches us some desire and some will: but these are not absolute wills and forward desires; and immediately the soul abandoned to the good pleasure of God perceives them, that moment she makes them die in the will of God.

You wish, further, to know what foundation this perfect abandonment ought to have.

It ought to be founded on the infinite goodness of God, and on the merits of the death and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, with this condition, that we have, and know we have, within us an entire and firm resolution of being altogether in God's hands, and of abandoning ourselves wholly, and without any reserve, to His Divine Providence.

I desire you, however, to observe, that I do not say that we must feel this resolution, but only that we must have it, and know we have it, within us; because we ought not to amuse ourselves with thinking what we feel or what we do not feel; and the

more because most of our sentiments and satisfactions are merely the amusements of our self-love.

Nor must you take me to mean, that in all these things we never have desires contrary to the will of God, or that our nature is not repugnant to the events of His good pleasure; for that may often happen. The virtues I speak of have their abode in the superior part of the soul; the inferior part ordinarily understands nothing of them; we must make no account of it; but, without regarding what it wills, we must embrace that Divine will, and unite ourselves to it, in spite of such inclinations. Few arrive at that degree of perfect riddance of themselves; but we ought nevertheless all to aim at it, each according to our vocation and capacity.

## CHAPTER X.

### OF DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW THE WILL OF GOD IN ALL THINGS.

Theologians distinguish in God two wills: the expressed will, and the will of His good pleasure.

The expressed will comprehends the commandments of God and of the Church, counsels, inspirations, and constitutions. We cannot be saved without obeying the commandments of God and of the Church, because God wills that we should observe them in order to get to heaven. As to counsels, He wills, indeed, that we should observe them, yet not as commandments, but only by way of desire. The will of God is also manifested to us by inspirations; still He does not wish that we should judge of them by ourselves, but that, in things of importance, we should have recourse to those whom He has set over us, to guide us, and that we should be completely subject to their counsel and opinion. The rules also

manifest to us His will, as being so many fit means for leading us to perfection.

There is, moreover, the will of the good pleasure of God, to which we ought to look in every event, — I mean, in whatever happens to us, agreeable or disagreeable, in sickness as in health, in affliction as in consolation, in death as in life; in short, in all things which are unforeseen, provided they are not manifestly contrary to the expressed will of God, for that always comes first. Well, we should always be ready to submit ourselves to the will of His good pleasure, no less than to His expressed will.

The counsel of self-abnegation, so much recommended by our Lord, what else is it but the renouncing of our own will, of our own particular judgment, to follow the will and judgment of another; excepting always cases wherein one would be offending God?

But you may say, I see clearly that what I am bid to do proceeds from a human will and a mere natural inclination; and consequently God has not inspired those who ask me. I reply, that it may well be that God has not inspired them to ask it of you, but that He does inspire you to do it.

But you may again ask, Why should I rather do other people's will than mine? Is not mine as conformable to God as theirs? For what reason am I bound to think that what they tell me to do is more an inspiration of God than the will which I feel suggesting to me to do the contrary? O God! it is here where the Divine majesty desires to make us gain the prize of submission. For if we always saw very distinctly that people had good reasons for ordering or begging of us to do this or that, we should neither have great merit nor great repugnance; but when the reasons are hidden from us, then it is that our will is repugnant and our judgment resists, and we

feel the contradiction. Now, it is on these occasions that we ought to overcome ourselves, and with a simplicity altogether infantine, set ourselves to the work without discussing or reasoning about it, and say : I know that the will of God is, that I should rather do another's will than my own, and so I submit myself.

If we ought thus to comply with the will of every body, much more ought we to do so with respect to that of superiors, whom we should regard and esteem as the person of God Himself, for they are His vicars. It is for this reason, that although we knew them to have natural inclinations, or even passions, by the movement of which they commanded or reprobated us, we ought not to be astonished on that account ; for they are men, and are consequently subject to all that : but we are not permitted to judge that their commands proceed from their passions or inclinations ; we must take heed of that. Nevertheless, if we were to feel palpably certain that it was so, we ought not to be weary of sweetly obeying and lovingly submitting ourselves with humility to correction.

It is, in truth, a thing very hard to self-love, to be subject to all these encounters ; but that is not the love which we ought to please or to listen to, but the most holy love of our souls, Jesus, who requires of His dear spouses a holy imitation of the perfect obedience which He rendered, not only to the most just and holy will of His Father, but also to that of His parents, and even to that of His enemies, who without doubt followed their passions in the sufferings which they imposed upon Him ; and nevertheless the good Jesus did not grow weary of submitting Himself thereto sweetly, humbly, lovingly.

## CHAPTER XI.

## EXAMPLES ON THE PRECEDING SUBJECT.

The first is St. Anselm, who was extremely beloved by every body, during the whole time that he was prior and abbot of his monastery, because he was extremely condescending to the will, not only of the religious, but even of the seculars. One man would come and say to him, "My father, your reverence ought to take a little of this dish," and he would take some. Another would say to him, "My father, that will do you harm," and he would at once give up eating it. He thus submitted himself, in whatever was not offensive to God, to the will of his brethren, and even of seculars, who might sometimes, and even often, be following their own inclinations.

Now this great condescension of the saint was not universally approved of, though he was beloved by all, and some persons indeed took upon them to represent to him that he ought not thus to comply with the will of every body, but that, on the contrary, he ought to make the will of others subject to his own.

"Oh, my children," said that great saint, "you perchance do not know with what intention I do this. Know that, remembering that our Lord commanded us to do to others what we would wish should be done to us, I could not do otherwise; for I would wish that God should do my will, and therefore I willingly do that of others, in order that it may please my God sometimes to do mine.

"I have yet another consideration, which is, that after the expressed will of God, I can know the will of His good pleasure in no better way than by the voice of another; for God does not speak to me, still

less does He send me angels to declare that which is His good pleasure. Stones, plants, and animals do not speak. There is, then, only man who can manifest to me the will of my God, and so I attach myself thereto as much as I can; and in obeying men, I think that I obey God, who manifests to me His will by them.

“Moreover, God commands us to observe charity with our neighbour, and to maintain union with every body as much as we can. Now I know of no better means for that than to be sweet and condescending. Sweet and humble condescension ought always to float over all our actions.

“Besides this, has not our Lord said, that if we do not become as little children, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven? Do not, then, be astonished if I am sweet and ready to comply like a child, since herein I only do what has been ordered me by my Saviour. It is of no great consequence my doing this or that, going here or staying there; but there would be great imperfection in my not submitting myself in that respect to the will of my neighbour.”

See you the great St. Anselm submitting himself in whatever is not against the commandments of God or of His holy Church, or against the rules? for that obedience must always come first. I do not think that if people had wanted him to do any thing against that, he would have done it. Oh, no, in no wise. But that excepted, his general rule was, in things indifferent, to yield in every thing to every body.

The second is that of St. Pachomius, who, when employed one day in making mats, condescendingly yielded to the wishes of a child who said to him: “My father, you do not make them well; it is not so that you should make them.” The great saint, although he made them in reality well, nevertheless rose up

with alacrity, sat down beside the child, who shewed him how to make them ; and he made them in that way.

One of his religious said to him : “ My father, there are two evils in your attending to what the child says : you expose him to the danger of vanity, and you spoil your mats ; for they were better made as you made them before.”

The saint replied : “ My brother, if God suffers the child to be vain, perhaps in recompense He will give me humility ; and when He shall have granted me that, perhaps I shall be able to impart it to the child. There is no great danger in making mats this way or that, but there would be a great deal of danger if we had not at heart that famous word of our Lord : *Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” Oh, how great the good of thus gently yielding, as the saints have done, to another’s will !

The third example is St. Gertrude, who, being a religious, and of a feeble and delicate complexion, was treated by the superioress, who knew it, more delicately than the other religious, and she was allowed a mitigation of the austerities customary in her rule. What did this good religious, think you, in order to become holy ? Nothing, except submit herself with all simplicity to the will of the superioress ; and although her fervour would have made her desire to do what the others did, she in nowise shewed it ; and when she was told to go and lie down, she went and did so, without making any reply, being assured that by so doing, in obedience, she would enjoy as much of the presence of Jesus Christ, her Divine Spouse, as if she had been in the choir with her sisters.

And these submissions were so agreeable to our

Lord, that he revealed to St. Matilda, that if they wished to find Him in this life, they should seek first in the most holy Sacrament of the altar, and next in the heart of St. Gertrude.

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHAT IS MEANT BY HOPING AGAINST ALL HOPE.

Among the praises given by the saints to Abraham, St. Paul ranks this above all the rest, that *against hope he believed in hope* (Rom. iv. 18). God had promised him to multiply his posterity like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea; and notwithstanding his receiving the commandment to sacrifice to Him his only son, Abraham did not on that account lose hope; and he believed that whilst he obeyed the commandment which had been given him to sacrifice his son, God would not fail to keep His word.

Great, assuredly, was his hope; for he saw nothing on which to rest, except the word of God. Oh, how true and solid a foundation is that word! for it is infallible.

Abraham therefore went his way, to accomplish the commandment of God with a simplicity beyond compare; for he took no more thought, nor made any more reply, than he did when God told him he must depart out of his country and from amongst his kindred. Journeying, then, three days and three nights with his son, without precisely knowing whither he went, his son, who was carrying the wood of the sacrifice, asked him where was the victim for the holocaust. Abraham said, *God will provide Himself a victim for a holocaust, my son* (Gen. xxii. 8).

O my God, how happy should we be, if we could accustom ourselves to make this answer to our hearts when we are in anxiety about any thing: Our Lord

will provide for it; and thenceforward to have no more carefulness and trouble, any more than Isaac; for he held his peace after that, believing that the Lord would provide for it, as his father had told him.

Great, assuredly, is the confidence which God requires us to have in His fatherly care and in His Divine providence; but wherefore should we not have it, seeing that no one can ever be deceived in it, and that no one puts his trust in God who does not reap the fruits of his confidence.

Consider that our Lord says to His Apostles, in order to settle in them this holy and loving confidence: *When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, did you want any thing?* (St. Luke xxii. 35.) *But they said: Nothing.* *Be not solicitous,* He said to them, *saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?* (St. Matt. vi. 31.) *And when they shall bring you to magistrates and powers, be not solicitous how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what you must say* (St. Luke xii. 11, 12).

But I have such slender talents, some one will say, I do not know how to deal with great people; I have no learning: 'tis all one; go and put your confidence in God, for He hath said: *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands: thy walls are always before my eyes* (Isa. xlix. 15, 16).

Think you that He who takes care to provide for the nourishment of the birds of the air, which neither sow nor reap, will fail to provide all that is necessary for him who confides fully in His providence, him who is capable of being united to God, who is the sovereign good? (St. Matt. vi. 26.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

## OF THE DIVESTMENT OF SELF, AND OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

I assuredly perceive with my own eyes, as it appears to me, that you have put in practice a very great self-divestment. Oh, blessed are the hearts thus divested! for our Lord will clothe them anew with graces, benedictions, and with His special protection.

Poor and frail creatures that we are in this life, we are, as it were, powerless to do any good except by suffering some evil for the sake of it; and we are even, as it were, powerless to serve God on one side, except by quitting Him on the other; and often it happens to us that we must quit God for God, renouncing His sweetnesses to share in His toil and suffering.

Daughters, on their marriage, often forsake the society of their parents and leave their native land, in order to be subject to husbands very often unknown to them, or at least of a disposition with which they are not acquainted, in order to give them children for this world. It is very necessary that the daughters of the Lord should have a yet greater courage, in order to form, in holiness and purity of life, children to His Divine majesty.

Keep, then, your eyes lifted up unto God. Augment your courage in holy humility; fortify it in sweetness, confirm it in evenness. Make your spirit perpetually the master of your inclinations and humours. Never allow apprehensions to enter into your heart. Each day will give you the knowledge of what you shall best do the next. You have ere now got over many a difficulty, and that was by the grace of God: the same grace will be present to you on all succeeding

occasions, and will deliver you from obstacles and bad roads one after the other, yea, though it were necessary for Him to send an angel to help you over the most dangerous steps.

Turn not your eyes towards your infirmities and insufficiency, except it be to humiliate, but never to discourage you.

Often see God at your right hand, and the two angels whom He has destined for you, one as your own guardian, and the other for the conduct of your little family. Say often to those holy angels: Lords, what shall we do? Beseech of them to furnish you ordinarily with the knowledge of that Divine Will which they contemplate, and the inspirations which our Lady wishes you to receive.

Do not look upon that variety of imperfections which live in you, and in all the daughters whom our Lord and our Lady have confided to your care, except it be to keep you in holy fear of offending God, but never to amaze you; for one ought not to be surprised if every herb and every flower in a garden requires each a special care.

In this world there is no good without its price; it is necessary, then, so to adjust our will, that either it may make no pretensions at all to comforts, or, if it does, it may sweetly accommodate itself to those discomforts which are assuredly attached to all comforts. There is no wine in this world without lees. Consider, then. Which is better, that there should be thorns in our garden, that we may have roses on them, or that we should have no roses in order to have no thorns?

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## CHAPTER XIV.

CONCERNING FEAR OF THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, AND  
CONFIDENCE IN HIS KINDNESS.

What gives me most apprehension is, that I am told that, besides your bodily afflictions, you are overwhelmed with a deep melancholy. I can well imagine how this must retard your complete restoration to health. Tell me, I implore you, what cause have you for feeding this sadness, which is so hurtful to you? I suspect your mind is still distressed by your fear of sudden death, and of the judgments of God. Alas, how strange a torment is that! My soul, which endured it for six weeks, can well sympathise with those who are afflicted by it.\*

But it is necessary for me to speak to you a little, heart to heart, and to tell you that whoever has a true desire of serving our Lord, and of flying from sin, ought in nowise to torture himself with the fear of death, or of the divine judgments. For although both the one and the other are indeed to be feared, still the fear ought not to be mere physical alarm, crushing the vigour of our minds; on the contrary, it ought to be so mingled with confidence in the goodness of God, as to become sweet in consequence of it.

And we ought not to begin to doubt whether we are in a position to confide in God, when we feel difficulty in keeping ourselves from sin, or have mistrust and fear, lest in particular occasions and temptations we shall be unable to resist it. Oh, no! for

\* St. Francis de Sales here alludes to the violent temptation of despair which he experienced whilst a student at Paris, at the age of sixteen years, and from which he was delivered by the help of the B. Virgin, which he implored in the church of St. Etienne-des-Grès.

mistrust of our own strength is not a deficiency of resolution, but a true acknowledgment of our misery. It is a better feeling to mistrust our own power of resisting temptations, than to assume a confident attitude, provided always that what we do not expect from our own strength, we do expect from the grace of God. For it has frequently happened that persons who, in the midst of consolation, promised themselves that they would do marvels for God, have failed when put to the trial; and others again, who greatly mistrusted their own strength, and feared much that they would fail when put to the proof, have, on a sudden, effected marvels, because that deep feeling of their own weakness drove them to seek aid and succour from God, to watch, to pray, to humiliate themselves, that they might not enter into temptation.

I further say, that we ought in nowise to be distressed at not feeling within us force or courage to resist temptation, in the supposition of its occurrence at this moment, if only we desire to resist it, hoping that, if it did come, God would help us, and praying of Him to grant us His help. For there is no need for us always to have the sensation of strength and courage; it is enough for us to hope and desire that we shall have it at the right time and place; nor is there any need for us to feel within ourselves any sign or mark that we shall have that courage; it is sufficient for us to hope that God will aid us.

Samson, who was called the strong man, never felt the supernatural strength with which God assisted him, except on occasions for it; and on that account is it said, when encountering lions or his enemies, that the Spirit of God came upon him (Judges xiv. 6).

God, who does nothing in vain, does not give you either strength or courage when there is no occasion for it, but only when there *is* occasion; and so we must always hope that on all occasions He will aid us, provided only that we cry unto Him. We should constantly use those words of David. *Why art thou sad, O my soul? and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God* (Ps. xlii. 5). And again, *When my strength shall fail, do not thou forsake me* (Ps. lxx. 9).

Well, then, since you desire to depend entirely on God, why do you fear your weakness, on which it is very true that you ought to place no kind of reliance. Do you not hope in God? and shall he that hopeth in Him ever be confounded? No, he never shall be.

I entreat you to pacify all the objections which may possibly arise in your mind. There is no occasion to make any other answer to them, except that you desire to be faithful on all occasions; and that you hope God will enable you to be so, without attempting to find out whether that will be the case or not; for such attempts are very liable to deceive you. Many are valiant when they do not see the enemy, who are not so when he appears; whilst, on the contrary, many are fearful beforehand, to whom the very presence of the danger gives courage. You must not fear being afraid. For the rest, God knows how much I would do and suffer to see you released from these temptations.

## CHAPTER XV.

### OF TEMPTATIONS AGAINST THE FAITH.

You ask me for remedies against the temptations against the faith which are troubling you. You must deal with such temptations exactly as you would with

those against purity. Dispute with them neither much nor little, but do as the children of Israel did with the bones of the paschal lamb, which they never attempted to break, but cast them into the fire. You must never answer nor seem to understand what the enemy says. Let him make as much noise as he pleases at the gate, never once say, Who goes there?

Very true, you will say to me; but he importunes me, and his noise is so loud, that those within cannot hear each other speak. Never mind; patience; they must speak by signs; you must prostrate yourself before God, and remain there at His feet; He will understand by this humble guise that you are on His side, and that you wish for His help, though you cannot speak. But above all, keep yourself fast within, and on no account open the door, either to see who knocks, or to drive away the troublesome applicant. He will at length weary of his noise, and leave you at peace.

Courage, then; provided he does not enter in, it matters nothing. It is, however, a very good sign that the enemy keeps knocking and storming at the gate; for it shews that he has not what he wants. If he had, he would not make any more noise, but enter in, and quietly remain there.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### OTHER REMEDIES IN TEMPTATIONS AGAINST THE FAITH.

I proceed to give you another remedy. Temptations against the faith assail the intellect directly, in order to attract it to dispute and think about them. Do you know what you ought to do, whilst the enemy is amusing himself with laying siege to the intellect? Make a sally by the gate of the will, and

charge him vigorously. I mean, that when the temptation against the faith presents itself to converse with you, and to ask you how such a mystery can be true, or what have you to say to this, or what have you to say to that, instead of disputing with the enemy by reason, your will should act on the offensive against him; and even answering the interior suggestion by uttering an exclamation, cry out: "Ah, traitor! ah, wretch! thou hast left the Church of the angels, and thou wouldst that I should leave that of the saints! Disloyal, faithless, and treacherous one! thou offeredst to Eve the fruit of perdition, and thou wouldst have me eat of it! Begone, Satan! *It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God* (St. Matt. iv. 7). No, I will not dispute to please you. Eve, being ready to dispute, lost herself. Eve saw the fruit, and was overcome. Live, Jesus, in whom I believe. I adhere to holy Church, and will never forsake her." Use such-like ardent words. I know not if I make you understand me; what I mean is, that you should get the better of these temptations by the affections, and not by the reason.

True it is that at such seasons the poor will is oppressed with dryness; but so much the better: her blows are so much the more terrible to the enemy, who, seeing that, instead of retarding your progress, he gives you the means of exercising a thousand virtuous feelings, and particularly that of making acts of faith, will at last leave you alone.

It will be good now and then to have recourse to some exterior penance. For there is no doubt that outward suffering diverts the evil, and the inward affection attracts the mercy of God. Add that the enemy, seeing that you trouble his ally and confederate, the flesh, is afraid, and takes to flight. But this third remedy must be used with moderation, and

according to the profit you may find, in the course of a few days, that you derive from it.

To conclude, these temptations are only afflictions like any others, and you must comfort yourself with these words of Scripture: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life* (St. James i. 12). I have seen very few persons who have made any progress without trial. You must, therefore, have patience: our God, after the tempest, will send a calm.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT MUST BE DONE WHEN TEMPTATIONS AGAINST THE FAITH, HAVING CEASED, RETURN AGAIN.

Your temptations against the faith have returned again; and although you did not answer them a word, they press upon you.

You do not reply to them; that is well: but you think too much about them, you fear them too much, you are too apprehensive of them; without that they would do you no harm. You are too sensitive to temptations. You love the faith, and you would not willingly have a single thought against it enter your imagination; and the moment such a thought touches you, you become melancholy and anxious about it. You are too jealous of this purity of faith; you fancy that every thing stains it.

No, no, let the wind blow, and do not imagine that the rustling of the leaves is the clashing of arms. I was lately standing near some beehives, and a few of the bees lighted on my face. I was about to remove them with my hand. "No," said a peasant to me, "do not be afraid, and do not touch them; they will not sting you; but if you touch them, they will."

I believed what he said, and not one of them stung me.

Trust what I say ; do not fear these temptations ; do not touch them, and they will not harm you. Pass on your way, and do not think about them. Be very resolute, and believe firmly that all the temptations of hell cannot sully a spirit that does not love them. Let them, therefore, go their way. St. Paul suffered terrible temptations (2 Cor. xii. 7) ; and God willed not to take them away from him ; and so willed because He loved him. Courage, then ; let that heart always be with its Jesus, and let the enemy make as much racket at the gate as he pleases. Live with the sweet Jesus and His holy Mother in the midst of the darkness, the nails, the thorns, and the spears. Live for a long time in tears without obtaining aught ; God will at last raise you up, and will make you rejoice, and cause you to see your heart's desire. I hope it will be so ; but if it were not so, still let us not weary of serving Him ; He will be none the less our God ; for the love we owe to Him is of an immortal and imperishable nature.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OF TEMPTATIONS OF BLASPHEMY AND INFIDELITY.

You cannot, and you ought not to believe that the temptations of blasphemy and infidelity come from God : and who has ever told you that God is the author of them ? He may, I grant you, send spiritual darkness ; He may send the feeling of de-reliction and loss of vigour ; He may send that bitterness of the spiritual palate which makes the sweetest wine of the world turn bitter : but temptations of blasphemy, of infidelity, oh, never ! They cannot

come from our good God ; His bosom is too pure to entertain objects such as those.

Know you how God acts with regard to such things? He permits the malignant craftsman who makes them to come and offer us those wares of his for sale, that, by scorning them, we may be able to prove our affection for divine things ; and ought we to disquiet ourselves for that? ought we to turn aside for an instant? O God! in nowise ought we to do so. It is the devil who is ever busying himself about our soul, to see if any where he can find a gate open (1 Pet. v. 8). Thus he did with Jacob, with St. Anthony, with St. Catherine of Sienna, and with an infinite number of holy souls whom I know, and with my own, which is worth nothing, and which I know not.

But, what! ought we to vex ourselves for this? Keep all the avenues closely barred, and let him be frozen: he will be tired out at last ; or if not, God will make him raise the siege. Remember what, I believe, I said to you once before. It is a good sign that he raises such a tumult and tempest round your will ; it is a sign that he is not within it. Courage, then ; whilst we can say with resolution, though without feeling, "Live, Jesus!" we need not fear.

And do not tell me that you say it with cowardice, without force or courage, but as if by a kind of violence you do yourself. O God! behold therein that holy violence which bears away the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xi. 12).

It is a sign that the enemy has indeed gained all else in our fortress, except the impregnable, invincible citadel, which cannot be lost except by itself.

It is, in fine, that free will, which, all open to the eyes of God, resides in the supreme and most spiritual part of the soul, and which depends upon none

other save its God and itself ; and when all the other faculties of the soul are troubled by the enemy, this alone remains, having control over itself, so as not to give consent unless it pleases.

Yet we see souls foolishly afflicted, because the enemy, occupying all the other faculties, makes therein a loud hurly-burly and confusion. They can scarcely hear what is said and done in that superior will, which indeed has a voice much clearer and more distinct than that of the inferior will ; but the voice of the latter is so rough and dissonant, that it drowns the clear sounds of the former.

Lastly, observe this : whilst the temptation is displeasing to you, there is nothing to fear ; for why does it displease you, but because you do not will it ?

For the rest, those vexatious temptations come from the malice of the devil ; but the pain and suffering which we feel from them comes from the mercy of God, who, contrary to the will of His enemy, draws from his malice that holy tribulation whereby He refines the gold which He destines for His treasure-house. I say, therefore, your temptations come from the devil and from hell, but your pains and afflictions come from God and from Paradise. The mothers are of Babylon, but the children are of Jerusalem. Despise the temptations, embrace the tribulations.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO DESIRE TO DO MORE THAN WE CAN.

Look with suspicion on all these desires, which, according to the common feeling of good people, cannot be carried into effect. Such are desires after a certain Christian perfection which may be imagined,

but not practised, and in which many learn lessons, but no one carries them out.

Know that it is the virtue of patience that ensures us the most perfection ; and if we must have it with others, we must also have it with ourselves. Those who aspire to the pure love of God, have not so much need of patience with others as with themselves.

It is necessary to suffer our own imperfection in order to have perfection. I say, to suffer it with patience, not to love or to caress it : humility feeds itself with this suffering.

The truth must be admitted : we are poor creatures, who can do very little good ; but God is infinitely good, is contented with our little works, and is pleased with *the preparation of our heart* (Ps. ix. 17). And what means the preparation of our heart ? According to holy Scripture, *God is greater than our heart* (1 St. John iii. 20), and our heart is greater than all the world. When our heart, being alone in its meditation, prepares the service which it ought to render to God, that is to say, when it forms its purpose of serving God, of honouring Him, of serving our neighbour, and of mortifying our exterior and interior senses, and such-like good designs ; at that time it works marvels, it makes preparations, and disposes its actions to an eminent degree of admirable perfection. Nevertheless, all this preparation is in nowise proportionate to the greatness of God, who is infinitely greater than our heart ; yet this preparation is ordinarily greater than the world, than our exterior force and actions.

A soul which, on the one hand, considers the greatness of God, His immense goodness and holiness, can never satiate itself with making Him great and marvellous preparations. It prepares Him a body mortified without rebellion, attention to prayer with-

out distraction, sweetness of conversation without bitterness, humility without any feeling of vanity. All this is very good ; these are good preparations. We must even get more of them, in order to serve God according to our duty ; but when they are completed, we must consider who it is that does them ; for when we come to put them in practice, we stop far short of them, and perceive that these preparations cannot be so great or so absolute in us as we imagined.

We can mortify the flesh, yet not so perfectly as that there shall be no rebellion at all. Our attention will often be interrupted by distractions, and so for the rest. But are we, for that reason, to lose our peace of mind, to be troubled or flurried or afflicted ? Assuredly not. Are we to form an infinity of eager and discontented desires after a particular point of perfection ? By no means.

## CHAPTER XX.

THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO DESIRE TO DO MORE THAN WE CAN.

We may very rightly make simple wishes, which witness to our gratitude. I may say, Alas, why am I not as fervent as the Seraphim, the better to serve and love my God ? But I must not amuse myself with forming desires, as if in this world I was to attain to that exquisite perfection ; or say, I desire this, I will set myself to attain it, and if I fail of reaching it, I shall be unhappy. I do not say that we ought not to put ourselves in the path of such perfections, only we must not desire to reach it in one day, that is to say, in one day of this mortal life ; for this desire would be a torment to us, and a most useless one.

It is necessary, in order to travel well, for us to attend to the accomplishment of that part of the journey which is immediately before us, to get over the

first day's ground, and not to amuse ourselves with desiring to accomplish the last day's journey, when our business is to make an end of the first. I will express it in one word, which I beg you to bear in mind: We sometimes amuse ourselves with the idea of being good angels when we are not labouring to make ourselves even good men.

Our imperfections must accompany us to the grave; we cannot walk without touching the earth. We ought not to lie and welter there; but we also ought not to think of flying; we are, as yet, unfledged. We die little by little; we must therefore make our imperfections die with us day by day. Dear imperfections! which make us recognise our misery, exercise us in humility, in contempt of ourselves, in patience and diligence, and in spite of which God considers that preparation of our heart which is perfect.

Earth as we are, let us walk on earth, since the deep sea turns our head and makes us reel. Let us remain at our Lord's feet with Mary; let us practise those little virtues which are adapted to our littleness; and there are virtues that are exercised rather in descending than in ascending, the better for our weakness. Such are patience, the bearing with our neighbour and doing him service, humility, sweetness, courage, affability, the endurance of our own imperfections, and other little virtues like them.

I do not say that we are not to ascend by means of prayer; but it must be step by step. I recommend to you holy simplicity. Look close before you, and do not look at those dangers which you see afar off. You fancy they are armies; they are only trees in the distance, and whilst you are gazing at them you may make some false steps.

Let us have a firm and general purpose, of in-

tending to serve God with all our heart and all our life ; and this done, let us not think of the morrow. Let us only think of achieving the present day well ; and when to-morrow shall have arrived, it too will be called to-day, and then we shall think of it. Besides this, it is necessary that we have a great confidence in the Providence of God, and a resignation to it. We must make provision of manna for each day, and no more ; and let us have no doubts ; God will rain manna to-morrow, and the day after to-morrow, and all the days of our pilgrimage.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### HOW GOOD DESIRES ARE TO BE FULFILLED.

We ought not to desire impossible things, or build upon difficult and uncertain ones. It is not sufficient to believe that God can succour us by all sorts of means ; but we must believe that He wills not to employ for that purpose those means which He removes far from us, and that He does will to employ such as are near to us.

It seems to me that you have discovered the true root of your evils, when you say to me, that you think it is a multitude of desires which can never be satisfied. A variety of viands, if they are in too great quantity, always overcharges the stomach ; but, if it is weak, it is ruined by them. When the soul has been purged of bad and worldly affections, meeting spiritual and holy objects, and feeling, as it were, utterly famished, it fills itself with many desires, and with such avidity, that it is overwhelmed with them.

Ask for remedies of our Lord, and of the spiritual Fathers whom you have near you : nevertheless,

I will tell you simply what I think on the subject: it is, that if you do not begin to put into execution some of these desires, they will be ever multiplying, and will embarrass your mind, so that you will not know how to get rid of them.

You must, then, come to results. But in what order? You must begin by such palpable and exterior results as are most in your power; for example, you are not without the desire of serving the sick for the love of our Lord, of doing any mean and lowly services in the house, for the sake of humility; for these are fundamental desires, and without them all others are, and ought to be, suspected and despised. Exercise yourself, then, strongly in the production of the results of such desires; for you will have no lack either of occasions or subjects for them.

This is entirely in your own power, and consequently you ought to put them into execution; for in vain will you frame purposes of doing actions, the subject of which is not in your own power, or is very remote from you, if you do not fulfil those which are within your reach. Carry out, therefore, with fidelity, the desires of the humble and mean offices of charity, humility, and other virtues; and you will see that you are well provided with occasions for them. Magdalene must first wash our Lord's feet, must kiss them, and wipe them with the hairs of her head, before she can entertain Him heart to heart, in the secrecy of meditation; and she must anoint His body with earthly balm, before she can pour the balm of her meditations on His divinity.

It is good to desire much; but we must subject our desires to a certain order, and arrive at results, each in its own season, and according to your power. We prune the leaves of the vine, that its humidity

and sap may be sufficient for the production of fruit, and that its natural force may not be weakened by an excessive growth of leaves. It is good to prune this multiplication of desires, lest our soul amuse itself with them, and relax its care to produce results, of which ordinarily the smallest fulfilment is of more value than mighty desires of things remote from our power: God rather desires in us fidelity to those little things which He does place under our control, than an ardour for great things which do not depend on us.

## CHAPTER XXII.

NOT TO BE OVER-FOND OF ANY THING, AND TO WISH TO BE  
WHAT GOD WILLS US TO BE.

I shall bless God all my life for the graces which He has prepared for you. Do you also prepare for Him, on your side, great acts of resignation, by way of exchange; and courageously settle your heart for the fulfilment of such things as you know He wills you to do, notwithstanding all sorts of contradictions which may oppose themselves to it.

Do not look for a moment at what you have to do, considered in itself, but only at the honour done to it, trifling as it is, to be willed by His divine will, ordained by His providence, arranged by His wisdom; in a word, since it is pleasing to God, and recognised as such, to whom should it be displeasing?

Take care to make yourself daily more pure in heart; this purity consists in weighing every thing in the balance of the sanctuary, which is nothing else than the will of God.

Be not, I implore you, over-fond of any thing, not even of the virtues, which one sometimes loses by the spirit of excess. I know not if you under-

stand me, but I think you do. I fancy it is not the property of roses to be white, for the red ones are more beautiful and fragrant; but it is the property of lilies. Let us be what we are: and let us be so, to do honour to the Master-workman, whose creation we are.

Let us be what God wills, provided we are at His service, and let us not be what we will, contrary to His intention; for, were we the noblest creatures under heaven, what would that profit us, if we were not according to the will of God?

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### OF HOW LITTLE ONE QUITS BY GIVING ONESELF TO GOD.

It is beyond measure sweet to me to behold with what a heavenly operation the Holy Spirit works in your heart, by inspiring you with a strong and generous resolution of abandoning the world. Oh, how wisely do you act in obeying this supernatural wisdom! for thus it is said (St. Luke i. 39), that our Blessed Lady *went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda*. This promptitude in doing the will of God is a great means of attracting mighty graces for the process and accomplishment of every good work; and you see that, after the rude shock your heart sustained, when by main force it rid itself of those feelings, humours, and inclinations, to follow the superior *attrait*, you are at last full of consolation, and enjoying repose in the midst of the burning bush which you have chosen, to sing therein for ever the glory of your Creator and Saviour. Raise, O raise your thoughts to that eternal consolation which you will have in heaven, for having done all that you have done.

It is indeed nothing, and I see that you feel it,—it is altogether nothing in comparison with your duty, and with the immortal recompense which God has prepared for you. For what are all these things which we despise and abandon for God? Nothing but little worthless moments of liberty, a thousand times more slavish than slavery itself; perpetual inquietudes, and vain, inconstant, and insatiable pretensions, which agitate our souls with a thousand useless solitudes and entreaties, and all for these miserable days of life, so uncertain, so short, and so evil.

Nevertheless, so it has pleased God, that he who quits these empty nothings, these vain amusements, giving in exchange for them an eternal and glorious felicity, which this single consideration of having resolved to love God with all our heart, and of having gained a single little additional degree of eternal love, will plunge us into an abyss of happiness.

In truth, I would not have neglected to tell you to trample under foot all your feelings, your interests, your fears, your aversions, if I had not had that confidence in the goodness of the heavenly Spouse, that He would give you strength and courage to take the side of inspiration and reason against that of nature and aversion. Behold you, then, all dead to the world, and the world all dead to you.

That is one part of the holocaust, and there remain two more yet. The first of these is to flay the victim, stripping your heart of itself, cutting and tearing away all those minute impressions given us by the world and nature; and the second is to burn up and reduce to ashes your self-love, and convert your soul, all in flames with celestial love.

Now this cannot be done in a day; and He who has given you the grace of striking the first blow,

will Himself give you the two others ; and because His hand is all fatherly, either He will do this without your feeling it, or if He makes you feel it, He will give you that joyful constancy which He gave St. Lawrence on the burning coals.

Therefore you ought to be under no apprehension, for He who has given you the will, will also give you the accomplishment (Phil. i. 6 ; ii. 13). Only be faithful over a few things, and He will place you over many things (St. Matt. xxv. 21).

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## PART SECOND.

### DUTIES TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### OF THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

IT is necessary we should know that love has its seat in the heart, and that we can never love our neighbour too much, or exceed the bounds of reason in that love, provided that it resides in the heart; for, so far as regards the signs of that love, we may easily fall short or exceed, going beyond the rules of sound reason.

The great St. Bernard says, that “the measure of loving God is to love Him without measure,” and that in our love we should assign no limits, but allow it to spread its branches as far as it can. What is here said of the love of God must also be understood of the love of our neighbour, provided always that the love of God floats above it, and holds the first rank.

This being laid down, we ought to love our neighbour with all, our heart, and like ourselves, as the commandment of God obliges us to do. Our Lord has said, *Love one another as I have loved you* (St. John xiii. 34); which means that, as our Lord has always preferred us to Himself, and has done so as often as He has given Himself to us in the most holy Sacrament, making Himself our food, so He wills us to

have a love like His one towards another, and that we should even prefer our neighbour to ourselves.

Observe particularly, that as our Saviour has done for us all that could be done, so He wills, and the rule of perfection requires, that we do all that we are able one for another, except sin. With that exception, our love ought to be so firm, so cordial, and so solid, that we should never refuse to do or suffer aught for the good of our neighbour.

Now, rightly to evidence our love for our neighbour, it is necessary to procure for him all the good that we can, both spiritual and temporal, praying for him, and cordially serving him as occasion requires; because a friendship which ends in fine words is no great thing. To do otherwise is not to love as our Lord hath loved us, who did not content Himself with assuring us that He loved us, but gave us effective proofs of His love.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN WHAT WAY WE SHOULD LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR.

You ask me in what way we should love our neighbour? I answer, that there are friendships which seem extremely great and perfect in the eyes of men, which before God are seen to be little and of no value, because they are not founded in true charity, which is God, but only on certain natural affinities and inclinations, and on considerations humanly praiseworthy and agreeable.

There are other friendships, on the contrary, which seem extremely poor and trifling in the eyes of the world, which before God are seen to be rich and very excellent, because they are only in God and for God, without any admixture of our own interest.

Now the acts of charity which we exercise to-

wards those whom we love in this way are a thousand times more perfect, inasmuch as every thing in them tends purely to God; but the services and other help which we render to those whom we love by inclination are of much less merit, by reason of the great satisfaction and enjoyment which we have in doing them, and because we generally do them rather from this motive than from the love of God.

There is yet another reason which makes these first-mentioned affections of less merit than the latter: which is, that they are not durable, because the cause of them being unstable, when any thing occurs to thwart them, they alter and grow cold, which is not the case with those that are founded in God, since the cause of them is solid and permanent.

St. Catherine suggests a beautiful comparison on this subject: "If you take," says she, "a glass, and fill it at a fountain, and drink out of this glass without moving it away from the fountain, the glass will not be emptied; but if you remove it from the fountain, the glass will be empty when you have drunk: so is it with our affections; when we do not remove them from their source they never dry up."

Even the outward marks of friendship which we give, contrary to our inclination, to persons for whom we have an aversion, are better, and more agreeable to God, than those which we give under the influence of a sensible affection; and this must not be called duplicity or hypocrisy; for although I feel the contrary sentiment, it is only in the inferior part of the soul, and the acts I make are made by a principle of charity.

And so, if those on whom I bestow these outward marks of friendship knew that I gave them with some feeling of aversion, they ought not to be offended at it, but rather to value and cherish them

more than if they proceeded from a sensible affection ; for feelings of dislike are natural, and of themselves not bad, if we do not act upon them ; on the contrary, they furnish a means of practising a thousand acts of virtue ; and we are even more pleasing to our Lord when we kiss His feet with an extreme repugnance to overcome, than when we do it without having to struggle against any such feeling. Those, therefore, who have nothing to recommend them to the affection of others, are in this more happy ; for they are assured that the love which is borne to them is excellent, because it is all in God.

We often fancy that we are loving a person for God, when it is only for ourselves. We avail ourselves of this pretext, saying that our regard for him is for the sake of God, when it is only for the sake of the consolation which we derive from it. For is it not much more pleasant to see before you a soul full of right feeling, following your counsels extremely well, and faithfully and quietly walking in the path which you have marked out for it, than to behold another soul, unquiet, embarrassed, and feeble in good, which requires the same thing to be told it over and over again? No doubt it is so. Your affection, then, is not for God, for the latter soul is as dear to God as the former, and you ought to love it more, because there is more in its regard to be done for the sake of God.

In another point of view, it is true, that when there is more of God, that is to say, more of virtue, which is a participation of the divine qualities, more affection is due.

## CHAPTER III.

## ON THE DEATH OF PERSONS DEAR TO US.

Your affliction is constantly in my mind, and I feel as if I could do nothing else but speak to you to console you; still I could say nothing but that the divine Spouse of our souls wills us to look upon all events that happen to us in the bosom of His heavenly providence, and to cast our affections into eternity, where we shall all be re-united, never again to be separated.

Your father has at last gone, in such a way that, if faith in life eternal reigns in our minds, as it ought, we should be greatly consoled in the midst of the affliction which has come upon us. Little by little, God severs us from the enjoyments of this world. We must, then, more ardently aspire to those of immortality, and keep our hearts raised to heaven, where we desire to be, and where already we have a great number of the souls which we cherish. Blessed for ever be the name of our Lord, and may His love live and reign in our inmost souls.

But you should console yourself by thinking that your good father lived all his years in honour and virtue, in public esteem, in the affection of his family and of all who knew him.

After all that I feel from the sad event, I conclude that, God having so willed, it was for the best. May His will be adored for evermore.

His divine majesty attracts us in this way to the desire of heaven, withdrawing from us by degrees all that was most dear to us here below.

For the rest, we should allow afflictions a passage in our hearts, but we must not make it their abiding-place.

Lastly, this separation is less painful, since it will be but short, and we not only hope for, but aspire to, that happy repose, where that beautiful soul either is or soon will be safely housed.

Let us, I implore you, acquiesce in this expectation here below; and instead of multiplying our sighs and our tears over him, let us bestow them for him before our Lord; that it may please Him to hasten his reception into the arms of His divine mercy, if He has not already bestowed that grace upon him.

Let us bless God, let us praise Him, let us adore the order of His decrees, let us acknowledge the instability of this life, and let us peacefully wait for the next.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

I have just been told that you are continually weeping over this painful separation. This indeed ought not to be; for either you are weeping for the departed or for yourself. If for him, why weep, since he is in Paradise, where there is no more any place for tears? If for yourself, is there not in this too much self-love? And would one not suppose that you loved yourself more than his happiness, which is beyond compare? O my God! for all that, I do not say to you, Weep not; no, for it is most just and reasonable that you should weep a little; I say a little, in testimony of the sincere affection which you bore him, in imitation of our dear Master, who wept over His friend Lazarus; but not overmuch; not like those who, placing all their thoughts on the moments of this miserable life, do not remember that we are also going to eternity, where, if we live well in this world, we shall be re-united to those we love, and who have gone, to quit them no more for ever.

We cannot prevent our poor hearts from feeling the condition of this life, and the loss of those who were our beloved associates ; still we must not belie the solemn professions we have made of joining our will inseparably to that of our God.

How happy are they, those dear ones whom we lament, to have seen coming little by little, and from afar, the hour of their departure ! for so were they prepared for departing holily.

Let us adore this divine Providence, and let us say : Yes, Thou art blessed, for all that pleases Thee is good. My God ! how sweetly ought these little accidents to be received by our hearts,—by our hearts, I say, which for the future must have their affections placed more in heaven than on earth !

You must recover your courage after this shock. Alas, these accidents (apoplexy) are but natural ; and our Lord, seeing our end approaching, sweetly prepares us for it by His inspirations, that we may not be taken by it unawares.

I am not surprised that you have been somewhat startled, and that you have been unable to regain your spirits so speedily, to offer them to your Lord.

O God ! You must prepare yourself better for the next occasion that presents itself ; for in proportion as we in this world see the goods we have in it breaking up before our eyes, we must have recourse the more ardently to our Lord, and confess that we are wrong in placing our hopes and expecting our peace anywhere else than in Him, and in the eternity which He has destined for us.

Let us abide in peace, and let us wait for His disposal of us. Let us reckon little of this world, except so far as it serves us as a sort of plank on which to pass to a better.

Alas ! we only have life in this world in order to

pass to that of Paradise, towards which we are advancing day by day ; and we know not when shall be the day of our departure from the former, and of our arrival in the latter.

## CHAPTER V.

### ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

My God ! how deceitful is this life, and how short are its consolations ! One moment they appear, and another moment hurries them away ; and were it not for that holy eternity which is the limit of our days, we should have good reason to complain of the condition of humanity.

Be well assured that I write to you with my heart full of sorrow for my own loss, but still more because of the vivid idea I have of the blow it will be to your own heart when you hear the sad news of your widowhood, so speedy, so unexpected, so lamentable.

If the multitude of those who will share your grief could diminish its bitterness for you, there would be little indeed of it remaining ; for there is no one who knew your dear husband who does not unite a heartfelt sorrow to the acknowledgment of his goodness.

But all this cannot console you, until time has softened your grief, and meanwhile God must sustain your spirit and be your support.

His sovereign mercy will doubtless incline towards you, and come into your heart to aid and succour it in this visitation, if only you throw yourself into His arms, and resign yourself in His fatherly hands.

It was God who gave you your husband : it is He who has withdrawn him and taken him to Himself. He is bound to be favourable to you in those sor-

rows which the right affections He gave you for your marriage will now cause you in this bereavement.

Such is our condition, that we die at an hour unforeseen, and that we cannot escape from death. Therefore it is that we must have patience, and employ our reason in softening the evil which we cannot avoid, in looking to God and His eternity, where all our losses shall be restored, and our union, severed by death, shall be re-established.

Taking into consideration all these things, we must accommodate our hearts to the state of life in which we are placed. It is a perishable and mortal life; and death, which reigns over this life, does not observe any certain rules. It takes its prey sometimes here, sometimes there, without any choice or method; the good among the bad, the young among the old.

Oh, how happy are they who, living in a continual sense of the uncertainty of life, are always ready to die, so that they will be able to live again eternally in that life where there is no death!

In a few days, or at latest, in a few years, we shall follow them in that passage, and friendships and unions begun in this world will be resumed, never more to encounter a separation. However, let us have patience, and let us courageously wait for the hour of our departure to strike, to go where our friends have already arrived; and since we loved them cordially, let us persevere in loving them, doing for the love of them what they desired we should do, and what they now wish for us, and that is, to moderate our grief, by reserving our eyes for a better purpose than tears, and our mind for better occupations than those of sadness.

And since true friendship delights in pleasing the person beloved, do you, in order to please him, com-

fort your spirit, and raise your courage, and imagine that he besought you to do so on his departure.

It is on these occasions that we must, with a holy love, acquiesce in the good pleasure of our Lord. But tell me; and we, when shall we go to that true country which awaits us? Alas! here we are almost at the eve of our departure, and we are weeping over those who have gone thither.

Take the winding-sheet of our Lord, which wrapped Him in the sepulchre, and dry therewith your tears.

Since our Lord loved death, and has given His death as an object of our love, I cannot take badly the death of any one, however dear to me, provided it take place in the love of that holy death of our Saviour.

May God and your good angel inspire you with all holy consolation.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

The thoughts of men are vain and useless in themselves to comfort a heart so afflicted as yours. God alone is the master and comforter of hearts. He alone it is who calms the souls of good will, that is to say, those who hope in Him.

It was truly a good advice which you received from His inspiration, when you proposed to yourself to retire for a short space from the crowd of this world's consolations, to place in perfect quiet the wound of your heart in the hands of the heavenly Physician, since even earthly physicians confess that no healing can be wrought except in quiet and tranquillity.

The interior words which God speaks to the af-

flicted heart which has recourse to His goodness are sweeter than honey, and more salutary than the most precious balm.

The heart which unites itself to the heart of God cannot choose but love, and finally accept lovingly the arrows darted upon it by His hand.

I shall freely tell you, as a remedy for your sorrow, that whoever wishes to exempt his heart from the evils of earth must hide it in heaven, and as David says, must "hide himself in the secret of God's face," must be "hidden in His tabernacle" (Ps. xxx. 21 ; xxvi. 5). Look steadily at eternity, whither you are going ; you will find that nothing which does not belong to that infinite duration should ever shake our courage.

You have been serving God, and have been taught in the school of His cross for so long a time, that not only you ought to accept it patiently, but, as I am sure you will, sweetly and lovingly, in consideration of Him who bore His own, and was carried on His own till death ; and of her who, having only one Son, but a Son of incomparable love, saw Him die on the cross, with eyes full of tears and a heart full of grief, but a sweet and loving grief, in favour of our salvation and of that of all the world.

Conform yourself to the Divine will in this loss, if that name should be applied to a short absence, which, by the help of God, will be repaired by an eternal presence. Ah, how blessed is that heart which loves and cherishes the Divine will on every occasion !

Oh, if once we had our heart well fixed on that holy and blessed eternity, "Go," we should say to those we love,— "go into that eternal existence at the hour which the King of eternity has marked out for you ; we also shall go after you. And since time is

given us only for that, and the world is peopled only to people heaven, when we go thither we shall have done all that we had to do."

O God! let us leave our children to the mercy of God, who left His Son to our mercy. Let us offer Him the life of ours, since He gave the life of His for us.

We must be firm and constant near the cross, and even on the cross, if it pleases God to place us there. Blessed are the crucified, for they shall be glorified. But our inheritance in this world is in the cross, and in the other it shall be in glory.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OF BEARING WITH OUR NEIGHBOUR'S IMPERFECTIONS.

To bear with our neighbour's imperfections is one of the principal points of the love of our Lord; for He shewed it to us upon the cross, having a heart so sweet towards us, and loving us so dearly,—us, I say, and even those who wrought His death, which was an act of most enormous sin, for that sin was a monster of wickedness; and nevertheless, our sweet Saviour had thoughts of love for them, giving us an inconceivable instance of the same, when even for those who crucified Him, and heaped barbarous injuries upon Him, He made excuse, and sought devices to make His Father pardon them in the very act of their sin.

Oh, miserable men that we are! for scarcely can we forget an injury done to us till a long time after we have received it. Nevertheless, he who shall prevent his neighbour in benedictions full of sweetness will be the most perfect imitator of our Lord.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## OF CORDIALITY.

Cordiality is nothing else than the essence of true and sincere friendship, which cannot be but between reasonable persons, conducting themselves by reason. There must also be a certain equality either in vocation, or rank, or aims ; and this is why we do not call by the name of friendship the affection borne by fathers to their children, because this equality does not exist in it ; the love of fathers being a majestic love, and that of children a love of respect and submission.

But between brothers, by reason of their like condition, the equality of their love constitutes a firm, strong, and solid friendship. For this reason, the first Christians all called each other brethren, a usage which now remains in monasteries only, the inmates of which are ordered all to call each other brethren and sisters, as a mark of their true and sincere friendship.

This friendship is called cordial, because it has its foundation in the heart. Now this cordial friendship ought to be accompanied by two virtues, one of which is called *affability*, and the other *good conversation*. Affability is a virtue which diffuses a certain sweetness over the serious affairs and communications we may have to transact with each other. Good conversation is a virtue which makes us gracious and agreeable in the recreations and less serious communications which we have with our neighbour.

This friendship ought to be shewn without using any ill-advised familiarity. We must laugh with those who laugh, and weep with those who weep, and we

ought to shew our friends that we are pleased with them, provided that holiness always accompanies whatever evidence we give of our affection, and that God is not only not offended with it, but that He is honoured and glorified.

The question here occurs, whether we may shew most affection towards the person whom we esteem most virtuous.

I reply, that although we may love the most virtuous with most love of complacency, we ought not to love them with most love of benevolence, or give them most marks of friendship; and this for two reasons.

The first, because our Lord did not do it; He seems even to have shewn more affection to the imperfect than to the perfect, since He said that He came not for the just, but for sinners. It is to those who have the most need of us that we ought more particularly to shew our affection; for thereby we shew that we love out of charity, better than by loving those who give us more consolation than pain; and in this we must conduct ourselves as the spiritual advantage of our neighbour requires. But apart from this, we should endeavour to love them all equally, since our Lord did not say, Love these, or those; but indifferently, Love each other, as I have loved you, without excluding any, how imperfect soever he be.

The second reason is, that we cannot judge who are the most perfect, or who have most virtue; for appearances are deceitful, and very often those who seem to us to be the most virtuous are not so before God. It may happen that a person whom we see fail very often, and commit a great number of imperfections, is more virtuous and more agreeable to God, either by the greatness of courage he preserves in the midst of his imperfections, not allowing himself to be

troubled by seeing himself so subject to fall, or by the humility he derives from it, than another who has in truth a greater number of natural or acquired virtues, but who has gone through less exercise and labour, and has consequently less courage and humility than he whom we see so subject to fail.

St. Peter was chosen to be the chief of the Apostles, although he was subject to many imperfections; but because, notwithstanding these imperfections, he had a great courage, our Lord chose him in preference to all the rest.

But if it is true that we have an inclination to love one more than another, we must not amuse ourselves with thinking about it, still less speak about it to him; for we ought not to love our neighbour by inclination, but either because he is virtuous, or from the hope we entertain that he will become so, and principally because such is the will of God.

## CHAPTER IX.

### OF AVERSIONS.

Aversions are certain antipathies, sometimes natural, which make us feel a little dislike from the very first to those who are the objects of them, which prevents our liking their conversation, as the contrary feeling makes us fond of the conversation of those to whom we naturally incline.

To shew that it is natural to have an inclination towards some and not towards others, we have only to look at two men coming into a room where two others are at play: the two who come in will wish one of them to win rather than the other. And whence comes this, since they never saw or knew them before, but from the fact that they are thus naturally disposed?

We see also the same law in brutes, who, not having reason, nevertheless have naturally aversions and inclinations. You may try this experiment with a newly-born lambkin. Shew it the skin of a wolf, although dead, it will take to flight, it will moan, it will hide itself under the side of its mother; but shew it a horse, although a much larger animal than a wolf, and it will exhibit no alarm, but will sport with it. The reason of this is that nature makes it friendly to the one and hostile to the other.

Of these natural aversions we must not make much account, any more than of natural inclinations, provided we submit the whole to reason.

What is the remedy for these aversions, since no one can be exempt from them however perfect he be? Those who are naturally rough will have an aversion to very sweet-tempered persons, and will esteem such sweetness an excessive softness, although that quality of sweetness is the most universally loved.

The only remedy to this evil, as to every other sort of temptation, is simply to turn aside from it, not to think about it at all: but the misfortune is that we are always anxious to know far too well whether we have reason or not for these aversions. Oh, we ought never to amuse ourselves with this search; for our self-love, which never sleeps, will gild the pill so well, that it will make us think our antipathies are good; and then, being approved by our own judgment and by self-love, there will no longer be any means of hindering us from thinking them just and reasonable.

Assuredly we should be well on our guard against this: for we never have reason to entertain aversions, much less to be willing to feed them. I say, then, that when the question is of simply natural aversions, we ought to make no account of them, but to

turn aside from them without seeming to take any notice, and so to wile away our spirit; but we must contend with and conquer them when we see the aversion is going in advance of mere natural dislike, and leading us away from the submission due to reason, which never allows us to do any thing in favour of our aversions, any more than of our inclinations, when they are bad, from fear of offending God.

But if we do nothing more in favour of our aversions than to speak a little less agreeably than we should do to a person for whom we entertain great feelings of affection, that is no great thing, for it is hardly in our power to do otherwise. When we are under the influence of that feeling, it would be wrong to exact that from us.

## CHAPTER X.

### OF THE MERIT OF OBEDIENCE.

To animate us to obedience when we are tempted against it, we should consider its excellence, its beauty, its merit, and even its utility. This observation applies to souls who are not yet well settled in the love of obedience; for when there is merely question of a simple aversion or disgust, we must make an act of love and apply ourselves to the work. Our Lord, even in His passion, felt a sorrow even unto death, as He himself says; but in the sharp point of his spirit He was resigned to the will of His Father; all the rest was a movement of nature.

I do not call it a want of perseverance when we make some little interruptions, provided we do not quit our work altogether: so it is not a want of obedience to fail in some one or other of its conditions, seeing that we are only obliged to the substance, and

not to the conditions of the virtues. For even though we obeyed with repugnance, and as it were forced by the obligation of our condition, our obedience would not on that account fail in being good in virtue of our first resolutions; but it is of a value and a merit much greater when it is done with the conditions we have alluded to; for any thing, however little, done with such obedience is of very great value.

Obedience is a virtue so excellent, that our Lord willed to conduct Himself through the whole course of His life by obedience, as He so often said that He had not come to do His own will, but the will of His Father; and the Apostle tells us that He made Himself obedient unto death and the death of the cross, having willed to join to the infinite merit of His perfect charity the infinite merit of a perfect obedience. Charity yields to obedience, because obedience depends on justice; thus it is better to pay what one owes than to give alms; which means that it is better to perform an act of obedience than an act of charity by our own proper motive.

I add that obedience is not of less merit than charity. To give a cup of water from charity will win heaven. Do as much from obedience, and you will also win heaven. The least thing done by obedience is very agreeable to God. If you eat by obedience, your eating is more agreeable to God than the fasts of anchorites done without obedience. If you rest by obedience, your rest is more agreeable to God than labour done without obedience. Finally, he who obeys as he ought will enjoy a continual tranquillity, and the most holy peace of the Lord, which surpasseth all understanding; and I may well assume, on the part of God, that he shall have Paradise for life everlasting.

## CHAPTER XI.

## OF OBEDIENCE TO SUPERIORS.

Obedience consists in two points. The first is to obey superiors, and the second to obey equals and inferiors; but the second belongs rather to humility, sweetness, and charity than to justice; for he who is humble thinks that all others surpass him and are far better than him, and makes them his superiors, and thinks it his duty to obey them.

As to the obedience which relates to the superiors whom God has placed over us to govern us, it is of justice and necessity, and ought to be rendered with an entire submission of our understanding and our will; and this obedience of the understanding is practised when we accept and approve of the commandment, and value and think well of the thing commanded.

Our natural inclination leads us to the desire of command, and gives us an aversion to obedience; nevertheless it is certain that we have a much greater capacity for obeying than commanding.

The most ordinary obedience has three conditions. The first is to accept the thing commanded, and to bend our will sweetly thereto, loving to be commanded: for it is not the way to make us truly obedient not to love any one who commands us, just as it is not the way to have companionship to remain by ourselves. Cassian relates that being alone in the desert, he sometimes gave way to anger, and taking up his pen to write, if it would not mark, he threw it aside in a rage; so that he observes, that it is of no use being alone, since we carry our anger with us.

The second condition is promptitude, to which

is opposed laziness or spiritual sadness ; for it rarely happens that a sad soul does any thing promptly or diligently.

The third is perseverance ; for it is not enough to fulfil the commandment if one does not persevere in fulfilling it ; and it is this perseverance which wins the crown. It is an act of great humility to do all one's life by obedience the same exercise, although lowly ; for one may perchance be troubled to think oneself capable of something greater.

This third condition is the most difficult, by reason of the levity and inconstancy of the human mind ; for we love one thing now, and to-morrow we will not look at it ; to-day we would choose one situation, and a little while after we seek for another, so great is this inconstancy of the mind ; but we must stay ourselves with the strength of our first resolutions, so as to live evenly in the midst of the inequalities of our feelings.

## CHAPTER XII.

### OF MURMURS AGAINST SUPERIORS.

Take great care not to be discouraged by listening to any little murmur or any sort of reprehension that may be brought against you ; no, for I assure you that the task of blaming is a very easy one, and that of doing better a difficult one. There needs scarcely any capacity to find faults and something to speak against in those who govern, or in their government ; and when they take us to task, or would point out to us imperfections in our conduct, we must sweetly bear it all, and then lay it before God, and take counsel with our advisers, and after that do what is thought reasonable, with a holy confidence that Providence will make it all to conduce to His glory.

Do not be hasty in promising, but ask for time to determine things that are of consequence. This is the proper means of ensuring safety in our affairs, and of nourishing humility. St. Bernard, writing to a Bishop of Geneva, says to him: "Do all things by the advice of a few people who are peaceable, wise, and good."

Follow this advice so sweetly, that your inferiors may not take occasion to lose the respect which is due to your office, nor to think that you have need of them to rule; on the contrary, make them know, without telling them so, that you do so in order to follow the rule of modesty and humility, and what is enjoined by the statutes. For, as you will perceive, we ought, as far as possible, to contrive that the respect of our inferiors towards us may not diminish their love, and that their love may not diminish their respect.

Do not trouble yourself about being a little too rudely controlled by the worthy extern you mention; but pass it by in peace, or do according to her advice in things where there is no danger in pleasing her; or do otherwise when the greater glory of God shall require it, and then, as adroitly as you can, you ought to gain her over to approve of it.

If you have any subject who does not fear you with sufficient respect, let her understand it by the means of some one you judge most fit to convey the hint, not as from you, but as from that person; and in order that, in every point of view, your sweetness may be distinct from timidity, and may not be treated as such, when you see any one make profession of not observing that respect, it will be necessary sweetly, and by yourselves, to remonstrate on the ground that your office ought to be honoured, and that all the religious ought to co-operate in maintaining the

dignity of that office which binds them all together in one body and one spirit. For the rest, hold yourself wholly in God, and be humbly courageous in His service.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### OF OBEDIENCE TO SUPERIORS IN WHAT REGARDS THE INTERIOR LIFE.

There are souls who will not, as they say, be led, except by the spirit of God; and they fancy that all the things they imagine are so many inspirations and movements of the Holy Ghost, who takes them by the hand, and conducts them like children in all that they would do. In this they greatly deceive themselves. For, I pray you, is there any vocation more marvellous than that of St. Paul, in which our Lord Himself spoke to him, in order to convert him? and nevertheless He would not instruct him, but sent him to Ananias, to learn whatever he had to do. And although St. Paul might have said, "Lord, wherefore not Thyself?" he did not say so, but went in all simplicity to do what was commanded him.

After this, shall we think ourselves more favoured of God than St. Paul, and believe that He wills to conduct us Himself without the instrumentality of any creature? The conduct of God for us means nothing else than obedience; for beyond this there is nothing but deceit.

There is one thing very certain, that all are not conducted by the same road; but it is also true that it is not ours to know by what road God calls us; that belongs to superiors, who have the light of God to do it.

We must not say that they do not know us well; for we ought to believe that obedience and submis-

sion are the true marks of a good inspiration. And although it may happen that we have no consolation in the exercises they make us go through, and that we have much in others, it is not by consolation that we ought to judge of the goodness of our actions: to regard, on these occasions, our own satisfaction, would be to regard the flowers and not the fruit.

You will draw more advantage from what you do in following the direction of your superior, than from what you do by following the dictates of your own instincts, for they ordinarily only come from self-love, which, under the show of good, seeks for complacency in a vain self-esteem.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN AUSTERITY, AND THE MORTIFICATION OF THE HEART THAN THAT OF THE BODY.

I perceived the suggestions which the enemy of your progress makes upon your heart, and I also perceive the grace which the most holy Spirit of God gives you to maintain you strong and firm in pursuing the path wherein He has placed you.

The evil one cares not about our mortifying the body, provided we do always what he wishes: he fears not austerity, but obedience. What greater austerity can there be than holding one's will continually subject and obedient? You are fond of these voluntary penances; if, after all, the works of self-love can be called by the name of penances.

When you gave yourself to God, after many prayers and much consideration, it was found good that you should enter into obedience and the denial of your own will, rather than be left to your own judgment and to yourself: do not, then, let yourself be overcome, but remain where our Lord has placed you.

It is true, that you there have great mortifications of heart, perceiving yourself so imperfect in that path, and so worthy of frequent correction and reproof; but is not this the very thing you ought to seek, mortification of the heart, and the continual sense of your own abjectness?

But, say you, you cannot do such and such a penance you wish. Tell me, I reply, what better penance could an erring heart have, than to endure a continual cross and denial of its self-love? But I say too much: God Himself will hold you with that same hand of His mercy with which He placed you in this vocation; and the enemy will have no victory over you, who, like the first daughter of this country, must be well proved by temptation, and well crowned by perseverance.

## CHAPTER XV.

### OF IMPERFECTIONS WE SEE IN OUR SUPERIORS.

You ask to know what ought to be done, if one saw imperfections in superiors; for one never supposes the existence, you say, of imperfect superiors.

Alas, if we supposed the existence of perfect superiors only, we should have to pray God to send us saints or angels; for as for men, we should find none such among them. We do indeed seek such as shall not give a bad example; but we do not expect them to be without imperfections, provided they have those conditions of mind which are necessary; and the more so, because there are many to be found more perfect, who, for all that, would not be capable of being superiors.

Tell me, did not our Lord Himself shew to us that we need not expect this, by the choice He made of St. Peter to be superior over the Apostles? Every

one knows the fault which he committed in denying our most dear Lord ; but, besides this, after having been confirmed in grace by receiving the Holy Ghost, did he not commit yet another fault which was judged of such importance, that St. Paul, writing to the Galatians, declares that he resisted him to the face, because he was to be blamed ?

Not only St. Peter, but St. Paul and St. Barnabas too, who had a dispute because St. Barnabas wished to take with them John Mark, who was his cousin, and St. Paul did not judge him fit for that purpose ; and St. Barnabas not wishing to yield to St. Paul, they separated, and went to preach, St. Paul in one country and St. Barnabas in another, with his cousin John Mark. Also it is true, that our Lord drew good out of their dispute ; for instead of preaching in one place only, they thus threw the seed of the Gospel in divers places.

Do not, then, let us suppose, that so long as we are in this life we can live without committing imperfections ; for that cannot be, whether we are superiors or inferiors, since we are all men, and consequently all imperfect, and subject to every kind of imperfections.

Our Lord has commanded us to say every day these words : Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us ;—and there is no exception to this commandment, because we have all need to do so. It is therefore no sound reasoning to say : Such a person is a superior ; therefore he is never angry, or subject to other imperfections.

You are surprised that, having had occasion to speak to the superioress, she spoke to you less sweetly than usual, because perhaps at the moment she had her head full of anxiety and business ; your self-love is all at once in alarm, instead of thinking that God

permitted this little dryness on the part of the superioress to mortify your self-love, which wanted her to caress you a little, and receive graciously what you wanted to say. But, in fine, it does annoy us to find mortification where we did not look for it. Alas, you should for that reason go and pray God for the superioress, and bless her for this beloved contradiction.

## CHAPTER XVI.

SUPERIORS OUGHT CHEERFULLY TO BEAR WITH OTHERS,  
PERCEIVING THEIR IMPERFECTIONS.

When a sister comes in all simplicity to the superioress to accuse herself of some judgment or thought which indicates imperfection in the latter, —for instance, that she has made a correction with some warmth, —I say that the superioress should humiliate herself, and have recourse to the love of lowliness. But if the sister is somewhat distressed in making this confession, do not let her make a great deal out of nothing, but turn aside the conversation, still taking care to hide humility in the heart. For we must be very careful that our self-love does not cause us to lose an opportunity of seeing that we are imperfect, and of humiliating ourselves; and although you may retrench the exterior act of humility, for fear of distressing the poor sister, who is already distressed enough, it must not be omitted interiorly.

But if, on the other hand, the sister shews no distress in accusing herself, I think it well that the superioress should freely declare that she was in the wrong, if such was really the case. You see that this little virtue of the love of humiliation ought never to be removed from our heart, because we have need of it every moment, since, however advanced we may be in perfection, our passions sometimes spring

up afresh. Such an instance is related of a religious under St. Pachomius, who, when in the world, had been an actor by profession; and having been converted and become a religious, he passed many years in most exemplary mortification, without ever doing any thing to remind any one of his former mode of life. Twenty years after he thought himself very fairly at liberty to get up some little buffoonery to amuse the brethren. But the poor man was mistaken; his passion for acting so revived, that from amusement he went on to dissipation, so that it was decided to drive him away from the monastery. This would have been done, had not one of the brethren answered for him, promising that he would amend, which really happened, and he became afterwards a great saint.

Observe, therefore, that we should never forget what we have been, for fear we become worse; or suppose that we are perfect when we do not commit many imperfections. Some faults we shall always commit, but we ought to endeavour that they be very rare, and, as it were, but two in the course of fifty years, as there were but two in the Apostles after they received the Holy Ghost. And if there were three or four, or even seven or eight, in so long a series of years, we ought not to lose courage, but to take breath and to strengthen ourselves to do better.

The sisters, then, ought not to be astonished if the superioresses have their imperfections; nor, on the other hand, the superioresses if their faults are observed; but they ought to observe the humility and sweetness with which St. Peter received the admonition given him by St. Paul, although he was St. Paul's superior. One hardly knows which is greatest, the courage of St. Paul in reprovng St. Peter, or the humility with which St. Peter submitted to

the reproof, even in a matter where he considered he was doing right and had a good intention.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### OF THE RESPECT DUE TO CONFESSORS.

I would have you give great honour to confessors ; for besides our obligation to honour the priesthood in them, we ought to look upon them as angels whom God sends to reconcile us with His divine mercy ; and not only so, but we should regard them as his vicegerents on earth ; and consequently, if it should happen that they shew themselves men, committing some imperfections, such, for instance, as asking any question not pertaining to confession, as, what is your name, whether you do penances, whether you practise virtues, and what they are, whether you have any temptations, and such-like ; I would have you reply, although you are not obliged to do so ; for you ought not to say that this is not permitted you ; oh, no ! for you may say in confession whatever you please, provided you only speak of what concerns yourself.

But if you are afraid of saying any thing relating to yourself, such as your temptations, you may reply : “ I have them, but, by the grace of God, I do not think I have offended His goodness in them.” But never say that you are forbidden to confess this or that ; say in good faith all that gives you pain, if you choose to do so ; but I repeat, be very careful not to speak of others.

In the second place, we have reciprocal obligations to our confessors, of keeping secret what they have said to us in confession, unless it be any thing to our edification ; but beyond this we ought to say nothing. If they happen to give you any counsels contrary to

your rules and your manner of living, listen to them with humility and reverence, and then do what your rules allow you, and nothing else. Confessors do not always intend to oblige you to do what they say under pain of sin: you must receive their counsels simply in the way of direction. Nevertheless, put a high value on whatever is said to you in confession; for you cannot conceive the great profit derived from the sacrament by souls who approach it with the required humility.

If they wish to assign for a penance any thing contrary to the rule, beg of them with all gentleness to change it, because, as it is against the rule, you would be afraid of scandalising your sisters. For the rest, you must never murmur against your confessors, if, by their fault, any thing happens to annoy you in confession. You can then say, with all simplicity, to the superioress, that you wish to confess to some one else, if she pleases, without saying any thing more; and by doing so, you will not discover the imperfections of the confessors, and you will have the advantage of confessing to your mind: but this ought not to be done lightly, nor for trifling grounds. You must avoid extremes; and as it would be wrong to put up with great defects in confessors, so you ought not to be so nice as to be unable to endure slight ones.

In the third place, I would have you take great care to particularise sins in confession; I mean to say, that those who have observed nothing worthy of absolution, should mention some particular sin. You must also take great care to be truthful, simple, and charitable in confession; that is to say, accuse yourself very clearly of your faults without dissimulation or artifice, observing that it is God to whom you speak, from whom nothing can be concealed, and in

nowise mixing up your neighbours in your confession: for example, having to confess that you murmured in your own mind, or perhaps with others, at the superioress having spoken a little too drily to you, do not go and say that you murmured at the too harsh reproof she administered to you, but simply that you murmured against the superioress. Mention only the evil you have done, and not the cause and what led you to it; and never, either directly or indirectly, reveal the sins of others, in confessing your own; and never give the confessor reason to suspect who has contributed to your sin; also introduce no useless accusation in your confession.

If you have had thoughts of imperfection regarding your neighbour, thoughts of vanity, or perhaps even worse; if you have had distractions in prayer; if you have deliberately consented to them, say so in good faith, and do not content yourself with saying that you have not taken pains enough to be recollected in prayer; if you have only been negligent in putting aside these distractions, say so in like manner; for general accusations are of no use in confession.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OF THE RESPECT DUE TO PREACHERS.

I would have you moreover give great honour to those who announce to us the word of God: we certainly are under a great obligation to do so; for they are heavenly messengers, who come on God's part to teach us the way of salvation. We ought to regard them as such, and not as mere men; for although they speak not with the eloquence of heavenly men, we must not on that account abate aught of that humility and reverence with which we are bound to accept the word of God, which is always the same,

as pure and as holy, as if it were spoken and delivered by angels.

I observe that if I write to a friend on bad paper, and consequently with bad handwriting, I am thanked as affectionately for my letter as if I wrote on better paper, and with the finest characters in the world. And why is this, but because my friend does not care about the paper or the handwriting being bad, but only cares about the writer.

We ought to act in the same way with regard to the word of God. We must not consider who it is that is preaching to us: it ought to be enough for us that God makes use of this preacher to proclaim His word to us. And since we see that God honours him so much as to speak by his mouth, how can we fail in respecting and honouring him!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### OF OBEDIENCE TO EQUALS AND INFERIORS.

The second point of obedience is rather humility than obedience; for this sort of obedience is a certain pliability of the will to follow the will of another; and is a virtue of great loveliness, which makes our spirit turn in any direction, and disposes us always to do the will of God. For example, if, in going somewhere, I meet a sister, and she tells me to go elsewhere, the will of God is that I should do what she wishes, rather than what I wish. But if I oppose my will to hers, the will of God is that she should yield to me; and so of all things when they are indifferent.

But if it happens that both parties wish to yield, they ought not to waste time over that dispute, but consider which course would be the most reasonable and the best, and do it with simplicity: it is discre-

tion that ought to be the guide on these occasions ; for one ought to abandon a matter which is of necessity for one that is indifferent.

If I wished to do some act of great mortification, and another sister came and told me I should not do it, or do something else, I would defer to another time, if possible, my first purpose, to do what she wished, and then I would finish what I had begun. But if I could not lay it aside or delay it, and if what she wished me to do was not necessary, I would do what I had first proposed ; and then, if possible, I would secure the opportunity of doing what the sister wished.

But if it happens that a sister asks us to do any thing, and that from surprise we shew some dislike to it, the sister ought not to take offence at it, or appear to perceive it, or beg the other not to shew such a feeling ; because it is not in our power to hinder our colour, or eyes, and our countenance from witnessing to the conflict within, although our reason is well disposed to do what is required of us ; for these are messengers which come unbidden, and which, although told to depart, generally disregard the command.

Why, then, should this sister wish me not to do what she asked, merely because she has observed that I have repugnance to it ? She ought to be glad that I do so for the good of my soul. You will tell me that it is because she fears she has annoyed you. Not so ; it is her self-love, which would not have me entertain so much as a passing thought that she is troublesome. I should have the thought all the same, even if I did not persist in it. If, however, to the expression of my repugnance I add words which openly signify that I had rather not do what she asks, she ought sweetly to allow me to say that I would cer-

tainly not do it, were we equal; for those who are in authority are bound to be firm, and to oblige their inferiors to obey.

Now, although a sister gives me a flat refusal, or exhibits a degree of unwillingness, I ought not to lose confidence in employing her another time, nor even be disedified by her imperfection; for if at present I bear with her, she will bear with me another time: at this moment she has an aversion for doing what she is desired, but to-morrow she will do it willingly.

If, however, I was aware by experience that hers was a spirit not yet capable of this mode of acting, I would wait till she was better disposed. We ought all to be capable of bearing with one another's defects, and by no means to be surprised at meeting with them: for if we pass some time without faults, we shall afterwards for a time do nothing but fail and fall into many grave imperfections, by which we must profit in the humiliation which we derive from them. We must endure with patience the delay of our perfection, doing always with a good heart whatever we can for our advancement.

But the means of acquiring this spirit of yielding to the wills of others is frequently to make acts of indifference in our meditations, and afterwards to put them in practice as occasion for them shall offer; for it is not enough to divest oneself of one's will before God, inasmuch as this, being done by the imagination only, is no great matter; but when it is required to do this in practice, then it is that we are called upon to shew our courage. This sweetness and condescension to the will of our neighbour is a virtue of great price, because it is true union with our neighbour.

## CHAPTER XX.

## OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE POPE AND OF KINGS.

I am very ready to answer your question; but allow me to speak as St. Gregory did to a virtuous lady in the court of the empress. She had entreated him to obtain of God the knowledge of what was to become of her, and he answered: "As to what you ask of me, and say that you will not cease your importunity till I have granted it, your petition is for a thing alike difficult and useless."

I say the same to you in regard to your question, What authority the Pope has over kingdoms and principalities? You require of me an answer alike difficult and useless: difficult, not in itself, for it is very easy to minds who seek it by the road of charity; but difficult, because in this age, which abounds in hot, sharp, and contentious spirits, it is not easy to say any thing which will not offend those who, setting up to be the headstrong defenders whether of the Pope or of the princes, will never allow any one to stop short of extremes, not considering that one cannot consult for the interests of a father worse than to take away from him the love of his children, or for those of the children worse than by taking away from them the respect which they owe to their father.

But I call it useless, because the Pope asks nothing in this point of view from kings and princes: he loves them all tenderly; he wishes for the firmness and stability of their crowns; he lives sweetly and cordially with them. He does hardly any thing in their states, even in what regards matters purely ecclesiastical, except with their agreement and goodwill.

What need, then, is there to be so anxious just now to examine into this authority over things temporal, and by that means to open a gate to dissension and discord? What object is there in figuring to ourselves pretences, or entering into disputes against him whom we ought filially to cherish, to honour and respect as our true father and spiritual pastor?

I tell you sincerely, I have extreme sorrow at my heart in knowing that this dispute is a plaything, and a subject of gossip among so many people, who, little qualified for its solution, instead of clearing it up, trouble it, and instead of deciding it, tear it to pieces; and what is worse, in troubling it, trouble the quiet of many souls, and tearing it to pieces, tear in pieces the most holy unanimity of Catholics, by turning them away, so far, from thinking of the conversion of heretics. Now, I have said all this to you in order to draw the conclusion that, so far as regards you, you ought not by any means to allow your mind to run after these vain discourses, but to leave all this curiosity, which does not suit you, to spirits which feed on wind. By natural inclination, by the character of my education, by the light drawn from my ordinary reflections, and, as I think, by celestial inspiration, I hate all those contentions and disputes which arise amongst Catholics, the end of which is useless; and still more those, the effects of which can only be dissensions and differences; but above all in this time, full of minds disposed to controversies, to revilings, to censures, and to the ruin of charity.

The Church our mother, who keeps us under her wings, has amply sufficient trouble to shelter us from the kite, without our pecking at each other; and we have enemies enough without, to make it a duty for us not to raise disturbances within the body of the Church.

Abide there ; be a humble spiritual daughter of the Church and of the Pope ; be a humble subject and servant of the king ; pray for the one and for the other ; and believe firmly that in so doing you will have God for your Father and your King.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### HOW WE OUGHT TO RECEIVE AND GIVE CORRECTION.

You wish to know what we ought to do in order to receive correction rightly, so that no feeling of it or sadness of heart may remain.

To prevent feeling, to hinder the blood rushing to our brow, that is impossible. Happy shall we be if we manage to have this perfection a quarter of an hour before we die : but to retain sadness of heart, so that after the feeling is over you could not speak with as much confidence, sweetness, and tranquillity as before ; oh, that is what you must not do : and to get rid altogether of this feeling, which you say you have removed to a considerable distance, but which is concealed in some little corner of your heart, or at least a part of it, which causes your sadness, it is necessary to submit your judgment, and not allow it to persuade you that the correction was made unseasonably, or through passion, or in any other similar manner.

But in order to this, you will ask, What is to be done ?

You must draw near to our Lord, and speak to Him of something else, until your spirit is restored and tranquillised. For whilst the trouble lasts, you ought not to say or do any thing, but remain firm and resolute not to consent to your distress, whatever reason there may be for it ; for you will never want reasons at such a time ; they will come in crowds ;

but you must not listen to one of them, however good it may seem to you; but keep yourself nigh unto God, speaking to Him of something else, as I said, and diverting your mind from the subject of your sorrow after you have humiliated and submitted yourself before His majesty.

But observe this remark, which I take pleasure in repeating because of its utility: humiliate yourself with a sweet and peaceful humility, and not with a sad and troubled humility; for it is our misfortune that we bring before God acts of humility full of vexation and sorrow; and so doing, we do not assuage our spirits, and we render those acts fruitless. If, on the contrary, we perform these acts before the Divine goodness with a sweet confidence, we should come out full of peace and serenity, and would very easily reject all the reasons, very often and generally speaking unreasonable, which our own judgment and our self-love suggest to us, and we would go and speak to those who corrected us with as much ease as before.

You torment yourself very much, you say, to speak to them; but if they do not speak as you wish, that doubles the temptation. All this comes from the same source we mentioned. What consequence is it whether they speak to you in one way or another, provided that you do your duty?

Taking every thing into consideration, there is no one who has not an aversion for correction. St. Pacomius and St. Francis, saints as they were, being each of them reproved by some one of their brethren, shewed some emotion at it; and the former went immediately to throw himself on his knees before God, asking of Him pardon for his fault, complaining that after so long an abode in the desert, he was so little mortified; and he made a prayer so humble

and so fervent, that he obtained the grace of never more being subject to impatience;—and the latter immediately threw himself on his knees before his brother, and supplicated his pardon.

Now, how could one suppose, I pray you, that such as we should not feel some pain when we are reprov'd? We must, therefore, follow the example of those saints who immediately conquered themselves, the one having recourse to prayer, and the other humbly asking pardon of his brother, neither doing any thing in compliance with their distress, but correcting themselves, and deriving great profit from their fault.

You will tell me that you receive this correction with a good heart, that you approve of it, and think it just and reasonable; but that this gives you some confusion in the presence of the superioress, because you have annoyed her, or have given her occasion of annoyance; that this takes from you your confidence in approaching her, although you are glad of the humiliation you derive from your fault.

All this is merely obedience to the law of self-love. You do not perhaps know that there is in us a certain monastery over which self-love presides; and this distress is the penance imposed upon you by self-love for the fault you committed in annoying the superioress; because perhaps she will not value you so much as she would have done if you had not erred.

Enough for those who receive correction; let us say a word for those who give it. Besides their being bound to have a great discretion in taking the right time and moment to give it, they ought never to be astonished or offended at seeing those to whom they give it pained at it; because it must always

be a painful thing for persons to see themselves corrected.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## OF COMPLAINTS ON THE SUBJECT OF CORRECTION.

You ask me if the sisters are permitted to tell each other that they have been mortified by the superioress.

I answer, that this may be done in three ways. The first is, to shew the joy the sister has had in being mortified, and at having gained this advantage for her soul, that she may make her sister take part in her joy, and bless God for it. The second is, to console herself, by unburdening her heart, and seeking for sympathy, so that the other may take a part of her burden : this way is not so endurable as the first, because there is in it more feebleness and imperfection. But the third is altogether bad, and that consists in telling it by way of murmur and displeasure, to make it known the superioress was to blame.

Although there is no harm in telling it in the first way, it would nevertheless be good not to tell it, and it would be far better to rejoice on it alone with God. As for the second way, this too ought not to be done, because by our complaint we lose the merit of the mortification ; we ought, on the contrary, to hide it in our heart, and to kiss and caress it as tenderly as we can.

It is also by no means to the purpose to go and say : " I have been to speak to our mother ; I am just as sad as I was before ; one ought only to attach oneself to God ; for myself, I receive no consolation from creatures ; I came away from her less consoled than I was before." No, it is by no means to the purpose to speak in this way ; and the sister who is

thus addressed ought sweetly to reply: "Why were you not well attached to God before you went to speak to our mother, and then you would not be discontented at her not having consoled you? Take care, lest it was from seeking God only because creatures failed you that you did not find Him, for He wills Himself to be sought in preference to all things. Because creatures do not content you, you seek the Creator. Oh, no; the Creator well deserves that you should quit every thing for Him, and so He wills that we should do."

When, therefore, we leave the superioress full of sadness, and without having received one single drop of consolation, we ought to carry our sadness like a precious balm, and take great care not to spill this choice liquor, which has been sent us from heaven as a most precious gift, in order to perfume our heart with the privation of that comfort which we thought to meet with in the words of the superioress.

But there is one remark to make on this subject, which is, that a sister sometimes carries with her a hard and dry heart when she goes to speak to the superioress; a heart that is not capable of being bedewed or softened with the waters of consolation, because it is by no means susceptible of what the superioress can say.

Another time, when your heart is tender and well disposed, she will only say to you three or four words, much less useful for your perfection than the former, which will console you. And why? Because your heart was well disposed.

You fancy that superiors have consolation on their lips, and that they diffuse it as they will in hearts; but it is not so; for they cannot always be equally disposed any more than others. Blessed is he who can keep an evenness of heart amidst all

these inequalities. Sometimes we are in consolation, and a little while after, our heart is dry; and then the words of consolation will cost us an extremely great effort to utter.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### OF THE MANNER OF GIVING ADVICE.

You wish to know whether you ought to have a great confidence and a great care in reminding one another charitably of your faults.

No doubt this is what you ought to do. For what would be the use of your perceiving a fault in your sister, without attempting, by a charitable hint, to remove it from her?

You must nevertheless be discreet in this work; for it would not be the proper time to give such a hint to a sister when you saw her indisposed or oppressed with melancholy, because there would be reason to fear that she would reject at once the friendly warning, if you gave it to her under those circumstances; you should wait a little while, and then admonish her in confidence and charity.

If a sister says to you words that look like murmuring, but seems, however, to have her heart in sweetness, you should say to her with all confidence: "My sister, this is not well;" but if you perceive that there is some emotion in her heart, you must turn the conversation as adroitly as you can.

You say that you are afraid of so often warning a sister of the faults she makes, because that takes her confidence from her, and makes her stumble by mere timidity. O God! we should not pass such a judgment on our sisters; it only belongs to the daughters of this world to lose confidence, when they are admonished of their faults: our sisters are too fond of

their own abjection to do so ; so far from their troubling themselves about it, on the contrary, they will have a greater courage, and will take the more pains to correct themselves on that account ; not to avoid being admonished (for I suppose that they have a sovereign love for whatever may render them vile and lowly in their own eyes), but in order that they may do their duty better and better, and render themselves more and more equal to their vocation.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### OF CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY.

Simplicity is nothing else than an act of pure and simple charity, which has only one end, namely, that of pleasing God ; and our soul is simple, when we have no other pretension in whatever we do.

The well-known history of Martha and Mary, who exercised hospitality towards our Lord, is very remarkable on this head. Although the object of Martha was praiseworthy, in wishing to treat our Lord well, she was nevertheless reproved by that Divine Master, because, beyond the very good end she had in view in her haste, she mixed up other purposes with it ; and thus she doubled that first end, for which reason she was reproved : *Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things ; but one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.* (St. Luke x. 41, 42.)

Christian simplicity is, then, an act of simple charity, which makes us have no other view in all our actions than the sole desire of pleasing God : this is the part of Mary, and the one thing necessary. It is a virtue which is inseparable from charity, which looks straight to God, and which cannot suffer any

interference from the consideration of creatures: God alone finds place in it.

This virtue is purely Christian. The pagans, even those who have spoken the best concerning other virtues, had no knowledge of it, any more than they had of humility. They have written well concerning magnificence, liberality, constancy; but nothing about simplicity and humility. It was our Lord Himself, coming down from heaven, who gave the knowledge thereof to man; otherwise these virtues would have remained always unknown. *Be wise as serpents*, said He to His apostles; but do not stop there; be, moreover, *simple as doves*. Learn of the dove to love God in simplicity of heart, having only one object or end, which is to please Him by the means corresponding to your vocation.

Thus simplicity banishes from the soul the care and anxiety with which many uselessly seek out a multiplicity of means to enable them to love God, as they say; and they fancy that if they do not do all that the saints have done, they cannot arrive at that end. Poor people, who torment themselves to discover the art of loving God! Do they not know that there is no other way but to love Him? They think there is some stratagem or other for gaining this love, whilst the greatest stratagem in the matter is to proceed with all simplicity.

But this simplicity ought to have no other motive for being excited to seek for the love of God but the end itself, otherwise it would not be perfectly simple: for it cannot allow itself to look to any thing else, how perfect soever, but the pure love of God, which is its only object. For instance, if you are going to office, and some one asks you, "Where are you going?" "I am going to office," you will reply. "But why are you going?" "I am going in order to praise

God.” “But why at this hour than at any other?” “Because, the clock having struck, if I did not go, I should be noticed.” The object of going to office to praise God is very good; but this motive is not a simple one: for simplicity requires us to go thither, attracted by the desire of praising God, without any other purpose; and so of every thing else.

This virtue, then, does not suffer us to employ ourselves with what people will say or think of us; because its only thought is to please God, and not creatures, except so far as the love of God requires it. After the simple soul has done an action which it thinks it ought to do, it thinks no more about it; and if the idea occurs what people will say or think of it, such a soul at once rejects the thought, because it cannot allow any interference with its object, which is to keep itself attentive to God in order to increase His love in itself. The consideration of creatures in nowise moves it, because it refers every thing to its Creator.

This virtue is practised even in conversations and recreations, as in every other action, although in this there ought to be a holy liberty to entertain oneself with such subjects as serve to promote the spirit of joy and recreation. We must be frank in conversation; but we must not for that reason be inconsiderate, inasmuch as simplicity always follows the rule of the love of God. But if we happened to say any little thing that seemed not to be so well received as we could wish, we ought not on that account to amuse ourselves with making reflections and examens on all our words. Oh! no; for it is self-love that causes us to make all these researches: but holy simplicity does not run after its words and its actions, but leaves the event of them to Divine Providence, to which it supremely attaches itself,

without turning to the right hand or the left, but following simply its path. But if it meets with any occasion for practising any virtue, it diligently avails itself of it, as of a means proper to enable it to arrive at its perfection, which is the love of God : but it does not agitate itself to seek for them ; neither does it despise them ; it keeps itself peaceable and tranquil in the confidence it has that God knows its desire, which is to please Him, and that suffices it.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## OF THE EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY.

You ask me how souls which are attracted in meditation to this holy simplicity ought to conduct themselves in all their actions.

I answer, that not only in meditation, but also in all their conduct, they ought to walk in the spirit of simplicity ; abandoning and giving up their whole soul, their actions, and their successes to the good pleasure of God, by an act of perfect and most absolute confidence in the eternal love of His divine Providence ; keeping their soul firm in this disposition, without allowing it to waste time in perpetually returning to itself to see what it does, or whether it is satisfied. Alas ! our satisfactions and consolations do not satisfy the eyes of God, but they only content that miserable love and care which we have for ourselves, apart from God and the consideration of Him.

Certainly, little children, whom our Lord proposes to us as the model of our perfection, have not ordinarily any care, especially in the presence of their fathers and mothers. They keep themselves attached to them, without regarding either their consolations or their satisfactions, which they take in good faith, and which they enjoy in simplicity, with-

out inquiring too curiously into the causes or effects of them; love occupying them sufficiently without their thinking of doing any thing else. Whoever is zealous and watchful lovingly to please the Heavenly Lover, has not either the heart or the leisure to return to himself, his spirit tending continually in the direction whither love carries him.

Spiritual lovers, spouses of the Heavenly King, do indeed view themselves from time to time, like doves near most pure waters, to see whether they shall be pleasing to those they love; and this is done by the examens of conscience, by which they cleanse themselves, purify and adorn themselves the best they may, not to satisfy themselves, but to obey the Spouse, for the reverence they bear Him, and the extreme desire which they have to give Him pleasure. And is not this a love very pure, very simple, and very perfect, since they do not purify themselves in order to be pure, nor adorn themselves in order to be beautiful, but only to please their Heavenly Lover, to whom if ugliness were as pleasing, they would love it as much as beauty.

And moreover these simple doves do not employ either an extremely long time, or an unquiet anxiety in cleansing and arraying them, because the confidence which their love gives them of being greatly loved, although unworthy (I say the confidence which their love gives them in the love and the goodness of their Lover), takes from them all disquietude and mistrust about their not being fair enough: besides that the desire of loving rather than of arraying and adorning themselves for love, takes from them all curious solicitude, and makes them contented with a sweet and faithful preparation, made lovingly and with a good heart.

Let us listen to and imitate the divine Saviour,

who, like a most perfect psalmist, sings of the sovereign arrows of His love under the tree of the cross. He concludes them all thus: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." After we shall have said that, what remains but to expire and die the death of love, living no longer to ourselves, but Jesus Christ living in us? Then will cease all the disquietudes of our heart arising from self-love, and that tenderness for ourselves which breathes only in an atmosphere of satisfaction and consolation; and embarking in the exercises of our vocation with the mind of this holy and loving confidence, without perceiving our progress, we shall make very great progress; without going, we shall advance; without changing our place, we shall make great way, as they do who sail in the deep sea with a favourable gale.

Then all the events and all the varieties of accidents which supervene will be received sweetly and gently. For whoever is in the hands of God, and reposes in His bosom,—whoever has abandoned himself to His love, and has given himself up to His good pleasure, who is there that can shake or trouble him? Certainly, whatever he meets with, without amusing himself by philosophising on the causes, reasons, and motives of the events, he utters from his heart that holy acquiescence of the Saviour, "Yea, Father; for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight."

Then we shall be all steeped in sweetness towards our brethren and towards our neighbour, because we shall see those souls in the bosom of the Saviour. Alas! he who looks at his neighbour, except there, runs a chance of not loving him either purely, or constantly, or agreeably: but there, who would not love him, who would not support him, who would not bear with his imperfections, who would find him ill-favoured? That neighbour of

ours is in the bosom of the Saviour as one well-beloved, and so lovely that the Heavenly Lover died of love for him.

Then also the natural love of relationship, of propriety, of convenience, of corresponding dispositions, of sympathies, of graces, will be purified and reduced to the obedience of the all-pure love of the divine good-pleasure : and certainly, the great good and the great happiness of the souls which aspire to perfection, would be to have no desire of being loved by creatures, except with that love of charity which makes us regard our neighbour with affection, and each in his rank, according to the desire of our Lord.

Then, too, we shall no longer desire those virtues the practice of which is not necessary to us, such as magnificence and the like ; but only those which are necessary for us, and the practice of which ought to be habitual with us, such as sweetness, the love of our own abjectness, humility, sweet and cordial charity towards our neighbour, and obedience.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THAT SIMPLICITY IS NOT CONTRARY TO PRUDENCE.

Many think that simplicity is contrary to prudence ; but this is not the case ; for the virtues are never contrary to each other ; on the contrary, they have a very great union each with another.

The virtue of simplicity is contrary to subtlety, a vice which is the source of contrivances, artifices, and duplicities ; and it is by means of this vice that we invent tricks to deceive our neighbour, and to make him suppose we have in our heart no other sentiments but those which we manifest to him by words ; and this is infinitely contrary to simplicity,

which requires that we should have our exterior conformable to our interior.

Many ask how we ought to understand those words of our Lord: "Be prudent as serpents." Not to mention any other explanation, I reply, that we ought to understand them thus: Be prudent as the serpent, who, being attacked, exposes all his body to preserve his head: so ought we to do, exposing every thing to peril, when it is necessary to preserve in us safe and sound our Lord and His love; for He is our chief, and we are his members; and it is herein that prudence perfectly accords with simplicity.

I will tell you further, that we should remember there are two sorts of prudence, the natural and the supernatural. As to the natural, we must mortify it well, when it suggests to us various unnecessary considerations and precautions, which keep our souls far removed from simplicity.

That which is supernatural ought to be truly practised, inasmuch as it is, so to speak, a spiritual salt, which gives taste and savour to all the other virtues; but it ought to be so practised, that the virtue of confidence, I mean that which is simple and loving, may surpass all, and make us abide in peace in the hands of our heavenly Father, quite secure, as we shall be by that confidence, of His most precious protection and care.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

THAT WE MUST TAKE NO PART IN EVIL-SPEAKING, NOR CARE ABOUT CALUMNIES.

In conversations at which you are present by necessity, be in peace, whatever may be said; for if it is good, you have wherewith to praise God; and if it is bad, you have wherewith to serve Him, by turn-

ing away your heart from it, without affecting to be astonished and annoyed, since you have not influence enough to hinder the bad words of those who choose to say them, and who will say yet worse if there appears to be an attempt made to check them; for in so doing, you will remain altogether innocent among the hisses of serpents.

As for calumny, do not allow it to enter into your mind, but stop it at the very gate, according to the old proverb :

He who over easily  
To slander's voice will list,  
That man he either wanteth head,  
Or wanteth heart, I wist.

Prefer dissimulation to resentment; for we are in the case of the Wise Man of old, who said, "If thou despise it, it shall vanish like smoke; but if thou trouble thyself with it, thou wilt be thought to blame." And as I often say, if the beard is neither plucked out, nor burnt off, but only clipped or shaven, it will grow again easily.

But I would that this dissimulation should be frank, as all those heroic actions ought to be which are practised for the love of God, without any complaints, without shewing repugnance to granting pardon; for the candour of the heart that pardons makes the person who did the injury know so much the better how much he was in the wrong.

No one who has the true foundation of honour can ever lose it. No one believes those slanderers; they are taken for worthless persons. The best means of repairing the mischief they do is to despise the tongues which are their instruments, and to reply to them with a holy modesty and compassion.

Believe me, the honour of good people is under the protection of God, who does indeed sometimes

allow it to be shaken, to make them exercise patience; but never allows it to be ruined entirely; on the contrary, He speedily raises it again.

You are quite right: a person who is in God's hands ought never to disquiet himself about his reputation. Let God do what He will with our life and our character and our honour, since it is all His own. If our humiliation serves for His glory, ought we not to glory in being despised? *Gladly, therefore, said the Apostle, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* (2 Cor. xii. 9.) What virtue is this! Humility and the acquiescing in humiliation. May we sincerely love those crosses we meet with in our road, and may God bless us in the love of His holy cross!

Certainly, most of our evils are imaginary rather than real. Do you think the world believes in its own slanders? It may be that some amuse themselves with them, and the others entertain some little suspicion. But know that your soul being good, and being well resigned into the hands of our Lord, all this sort of attacks will vanish like smoke in the wind; and the stronger the wind is, the quicker will they disappear, especially satires of the day; for calumny, which has neither father nor mother to avow it, shews itself to be illegitimate. "Alas," said St. Gregory to an afflicted bishop, "if your heart were in heaven, the winds of the earth would never unsettle it: to him who has renounced the world, nothing that passes in the world can do any mischief." Cast yourself at the feet of the Crucified, and see how many injuries He sustains: supplicate Him by the sweetness with which He received them, that He may give you strength to sustain these little noises, you, to whom they are fallen in inheritance, as to His sworn servant: *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is*

*the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and speak all this evil against you untruly for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.*

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### HOW HUMAN PRUDENCE SHOULD BE CORRECTED.

When human prudence mixes itself up in our purposes, it is very difficult to silence it, for it is wonderfully importunate, and thrusts itself audaciously and vehemently into our affairs in spite of us.

What must we do hereupon, that our intention may be purified? Let us see if our purpose is lawful, just, and pious; and if it is, let us propose and deliberate about doing it, not to obey human prudence, but to accomplish the will of God.

If you have a daughter, for example, whom human prudence dictates to you should be placed in religion, for some reason connected with the state of your affairs; then you will say to yourself (not before men, but before God), O Lord, I wish to offer you this daughter, because, such as she is, she is Thine: and although human prudence excites and inclines me to this, nevertheless, Lord, if I knew that it was not also your good pleasure, in spite of human prudence, I would in nowise do it, rejecting herein that prudence which my heart feels, but to which it desires not to consent, and embracing your will, which my heart does not perceive as to feeling, but to which it consents in its resolution. Oh, it is in every thing that the human spirit troubles us with its pretensions, and comes importunately to interfere with our affairs.

We are not more holy than the apostle St. Paul, who felt (Rom. vii.) two wills in the midst of his soul,

the one, which would have him do according to the old man,—and this made itself most felt; and the other, which would have him do according to the spirit of God,—and this was less sensibly felt; but nevertheless it ruled, and according to it he lived. This is why, on the one hand, he lamented, *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* and, on the other, he said: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii. 20.) And at every step almost we must make the act of resignation, *Father, not my will, but Thine be done* (St. Luke xxii. 42); and this done, to allow human prudence to murmur as it will; for the world will no longer belong to it, and you may say to it, as the Samaritans said to the Samaritan woman: *We now believe, not for thy saying; for we ourselves have heard Him.* (St. John iv. 42.)

It will be no longer for the sake of human prudence, although that may have excited your will, that you fulfil this resolution, but because you know that it is agreeable to God: thus shall you correct the human will by the infusion of the divine will.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW WE SHOULD BEHAVE OURSELVES TO THOSE FROM WHOM WE HAVE RECEIVED A CONSIDERABLE INJURY.

You ask me how I wish that you should act on an interview with the gentleman who killed your husband. I reply, that it is not necessary you should seek either day or occasion for it; but if such an occasion does present itself, I wish you to keep your heart calm, gracious, and compassionate.

I know that, doubtless, your heart will be stirred and agitated, that your blood will boil; but what matters that? Our dear Saviour felt this at the sight of dead Lazarus, and of the representation of His Pas-

sion. Yes; but what says the Scripture? That on both occasions He lifted up His eyes to heaven. God makes us see in these emotions that we are made of flesh and blood as well as spirit.

I have explained myself sufficiently. I reply, I do not wish that you should seek an interview with this poor man, but that you should be condescending to those who wished you should grant one; and that you should shew yourself resigned to all things, even the death of your husband, or that of your father, of your children, and of your nearest relations; yes, your own death, in the death and in the love of our sweet Saviour. Courage! let us go forward, and let us practise these low and vulgar, yet solid, holy, and excellent virtues. Abide in peace; and keep yourself on your feet, and on the side of heaven. God has held you by His good hand in your affliction. He will assuredly always do so. "My God," said St. Gregory to an afflicted bishop, "how can it be that our hearts, which are already in heaven, are agitated by the accidents of the earth?" It was well said: the mere sight of our dear crucified Jesus can soften in a moment all our sorrows, which are only flowers in comparison with those thorns; and then our great meeting-point is in that eternity, the reward of which in view, how can any thing affect us which is terminated by time?

Continue to unite yourself more and more with this Saviour; plunge your heart into that abyss of charity which is His; and let us say always, with all our heart, Let me die, and let Jesus live. Our death will be happy, if it be in His life. *I live*, said the apostle; but he corrects himself immediately, *now not I, but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii. 20.)

Blessed be you with the benediction which the divine goodness has prepared for hearts which aban-

don themselves a prey to His holy and sacred love. And courage!—God is good to us : let all else be evil to us, what matters it? Live joyously before Him. Years go on, and eternity approaches to us ; may we so employ those years in the divine love, that we may enjoy an eternity in His glory !

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### OF PATIENCE AND RESIGNATION IN LAWSUITS.

I know the multitude of your sorrows, and I have recommended them to our Lord, that it may please Him to bless them with that sacred benediction with which He hath blessed those of His dearest servants, that they may be employed in the sanctification of His holy name in your soul.

I must still confess that, in my own opinion, the afflictions regarding a person's own self and those regarding sins are the most distressing ; nevertheless, those regarding lawsuits excite my compassion the most, for they are the most dangerous to the soul. How many persons have we seen in peace under the thorns of sickness or the loss of friends, who have lost interior peace in the vexatiousness of a lawsuit ! And this is the reason, or rather the cause without reason : it is, that we have difficulty in believing that the evil of lawsuits is employed by God for our exercise, because we see that they are men who contend against us ; and not venturing to murmur against that Providence, all good and all wise, we murmur against the persons who afflict us ; and we suffer from them, not without great danger of losing eternity,—the only loss which we ought to dread in this life.

Well ! when ought we to wish to shew our fidelity to our Saviour, if not on these occasions? When

ought we to wish to keep our heart, our judgment, and our tongue under bridle, if not on these uneven paths, so near the precipice? For God's sake, do not allow a season so favourable to your spiritual advancement to pass without collecting from it abundance of the fruits of patience, lowliness, sweetness, and the love of humiliation. Remember that our Lord never said one word against those who condemned Him. He judged them not. He was judged and condemned wrongfully; and He abode in peace, and died in peace, and revenged Himself only by praying for them: and as for us, we judge our judges and our opponents; we arm ourselves with complaints and reproaches.

Believe me, it is necessary to be firm and constant in the love of our neighbour; and I say this with all my heart, without having regard either to your opponents or to their relation towards me; and I think that nothing touches me in this business except jealousy for your perfection. You will have God always when you please; and is not this being rich enough? I entreat you, let His will be your repose, and His cross your glory.

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO GO TO LAW, BUT HAVE RECOURSE TO  
ARBITRATION.

How long will you pretend to other victories over the world and the affection for what you may have in it, but those which our Lord won over it, and to the imitation of which He in so many ways exhorts you? How did He do, that Lord of all the world? It is true He was the lawful Lord of all the world: and did He ever go to law to have only whereon to lay His head? They did Him a thousand wrongs:

what suits did He ever make about them? Before what tribunal did He ever cause any person to be cited? Never once before any. He would not even cite the executioners who crucified Him before the tribunal of the justice of God; on the contrary, He invoked in their favour the authority of mercy.

And this is what He has so often inculcated on us: *If a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him.* (St. Matt. v. 40.) I am in no respect superstitious, and I do not at all blame those who do go to law, provided that it is in truth, judgment, and justice; but I say, I cry out, I write, and if need were, I would write it in my blood, that whoever would be perfect, and altogether a child of Jesus Christ crucified, must practise this doctrine of our Lord. Let the world murmur, let human prudence raise its eyebrows in scorn as it pleases; let all the wise ones of the age invent as many evasions, pretexts, and excuses as they will; this word is to be preferred to all prudence: *He that will take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him.*

But, you will tell me, that is meant in certain cases. True; but, thanks be to God, we are in that case. For we aspire to perfection, and we wish to follow, the nearest we can, him who with an affection truly apostolic said: *Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content* (1 Tim. vi. 8); and cried unto the Corinthians, *Already indeed there is plainly a fault among you, that you have lawsuits one with another.* (1 Cor. vi. 7.) But listen to the sentiments and counsel of that man who lived not in himself (Gal. ii. 20), but Jesus Christ in him: *Why do you not rather, he adds, take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* And observe that he speaks not to a single soul aspiring

in a particular manner to the perfect life, but to all the Corinthians. Observe that he would have us suffer ourselves to be defrauded. Observe that he tells them that it is a fault to go to law against those who wrong them. But why a fault? Because that in going to law they scandalised the infidels of the world, who said: "See what Christians are Christians!" Their Master saith: *He that will take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him.* See how for temporal goods they put in jeopardy eternal ones, and the tender and brotherly love which they ought to have one for another. Observe moreover, said St. Augustine, the lesson of our Lord. He does not say: He that will take away thy ring, let him have thy necklace also, which are both of them superfluous things; but He speaks of the coat and the cloak, which are necessary things.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

Oh! behold the wisdom of God. Behold His prudence, which consists in the most sacred and inestimable simplicity, childishness, and, to use the apostolic phrase, in the most holy folly of the cross. But, human prudence will say, Whither are you taking us? What! do you wish us to be trodden under foot, to have our noses pulled, to be trifled with like fools, without saying one word? Yes, it is true, I do wish that; yet I do not wish it myself, but Jesus Christ wishes it in me; and the apostle of the cross and of the Crucified cries out: *Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted; we are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all.* (1 Cor. iv. 11.) The inhabitants

of Babylon do not understand this doctrine; but the inhabitants of Mount Calvary practise it.

Oh, Father, you will say, you are very severe all at once. It is certainly not all at once; for from the time that I had grace to know a little of the fruit of the cross, this feeling entered into my mind and never left it. If I have not lived conformably to it, it has been by the weakness of my heart, and not by feeling. The clamour of the world has made me outwardly do the evil I hated inwardly. I do not here examine my conscience; but as far as I see, in the main I am speaking the truth, so much the less excuse for me.

I would have you be prudent like the serpent, which divests itself altogether, not of its habits but of its skin, to grow young again; and which hides its head (signifying to us, says St. Gregory, fidelity to the words of the gospel), and exposes all the rest to the mercy of its enemies, careful only to preserve the head safe. You have about you so many persons of honour, wisdom, ability, cordiality, and piety, will it not be easy for them to bring your adversaries to such views as may give you a holy satisfaction? Are they tigers, who will not allow themselves wisely to be brought back to reason? And would not the good father take pleasure in serving God in your affair, which I may almost say concerns the salvation of your soul, but at all events certainly your advancement in perfection?

How many duplicities, artifices, worldly longings, and perhaps how many lies; how many acts of petty injustice, and sly, well-concealed, and imperceptible calumnies, or at least half-calumnies,—do not people employ in these entanglements of legal proceedings!

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

Will you not say that you wish to marry, to scandalise all the world with manifest inconsistency, if you have not a monitor continually to whisper in your ears the purity of sincerity? Will you not say that you wish to live in the world, and to be regarded according to your rank? that you require to have this and that? And then what will you do with that crowd of thoughts and imaginations such pursuits will produce in your mind?

Leave, I beseech you, to worldlings their world. What need have you of what is required to go through it? Surely two thousand crowns, and less, will most abundantly suffice for a daughter who loves our crucified Lord. An allowance of a hundred and fifty or two hundred crowns is riches for a daughter who believes in the article of evangelical poverty.

But if I were not a cloistered religious, but only associated to some monastery, I should not have the means of being addressed as "madame," except by a servant or two. Well; did you ever hear that our Blessed Lady had as many? And what consequence is it whether any one knows that you are descended from a noble house, if only they know that you belong to the house of God?

Oh, but I should wish to found some religious house, or at least to give great assistance to a house, for being sickly, I should thereby be supported the more cheerfully. Yes, it is true; I knew well that your piety would throw out a plank to self-love. Certainly, we do not love crosses if they are not of gold, adorned with pearls, and enamelled. It is a rich, although a very devout and admirably

spiritual abjectness, to be regarded by a community as their foundress, or at least a great benefactress. Lucifer would have been content to remain in heaven on such a condition. But to live on alone, like our Lord, to receive the charity of another in our sicknesses, we who in extraction and spirit are this and that, is indeed a very painful and difficult thing. Difficult, truly, it is to man, but not to the Son of God, who will obtain you that grace.

But is it not a good thing to have one's property, to employ it as one likes in the service of God? The words "as one likes" clear up our difference. But I say, as *you* like, Father. Well, then, I like that you should be content with what M. and Madame —— advise; and that as for the rest, you should leave it for the love of God and the edification of your neighbour, and the peace of the souls of the ladies your sisters, and that you should thus consecrate it to the love of your neighbour and the glory of the Christian spirit. O my God, what benedictions, what graces, what spiritual riches, will your soul enjoy, if you do so! You will abound, and more than abound. God will bless the little you have, and He will content you. No, no; it is not difficult for God to do as much with five barley-loaves as Solomon with all his cooks and purveyors. Abide in peace.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

##### OF SWEETNESS IN THE MIDST OF DOMESTIC ANNOYANCE.

It seems to me that I have not quite told you all I wished concerning those slight but frequent feelings of impatience in the management of your household. I tell you, therefore, that it is necessary you should pay special attention to maintain sweet-

ness of temper throughout; and that, on rising in the morning, coming from meditation, returning from mass or communion, and always when you resume your domestic affairs, you ought to take care to begin sweetly, and at successive moments to watch your heart and see whether it is sweet; and if it is not, above all things to make it so: but if it is sweet, then you must praise God for it, and employ it in the affairs which present themselves, taking particular care not to allow it to dissipate itself.

Do you not see those who frequently eat honey find sour things more sour, and bitter things more bitter, and easily get disgusted with rough-tasted food? so your soul, often occupying itself with spiritual exercises, which are sweet and agreeable to the mind, when it returns to bodily, exterior, and material exercises, finds them very harsh and very troublesome, wherefore it easily gets impatient of them; and it is consequently necessary that in these exercises you should consider the will of God which is in them, and not the thing itself which is being done.

Often invoke the one and fair dove of the heavenly Spouse, that she may obtain for you a true dove's heart, and that you may be a dove, not only as flying by prayer, but still more in your nest, and with all those who surround you.

My God, how treacherous is this life, and how desirable is eternity! How blessed are those who desire it! Let us keep fast hold of the merciful hand of our good God; for He wills to draw us after Him.

Let us be very sweet and humble in heart towards all, but above all towards our own. Let us not agitate ourselves; let us go on with all sweetness, bearing with one another. Let us take good care

that our heart does not escape us. Alas! David says, *My heart hath forsaken me.* (Ps. xxxix. 13.) But our heart will never fail us, if we do not fail it. Let us keep it always in our hands, and let Jesus Christ be always in our heart.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## OF THE DEFERENCE WHICH IS DUE TO FATHERS AND HUSBANDS.

Truly we have a good father, and you have an excellent husband. Alas! they are a little jealous of their rule and dominion, which seems to them somewhat interfered with when any one acts without their authority and without their orders. What would you have? You must indulge them in this little human failing. They wish to be masters; and is it not reasonable they should? It is certainly so in whatever relates to the service which you owe them.

But these good lords do not consider that for the good of the soul trust must be reposed in directors and spiritual physicians; and that, saving the rights which they have over you, you ought to provide for your spiritual good by the means judged suitable by those who are set over the conduct of souls.

But notwithstanding all this, you are bound to yield very much to their will, to bear with their humours, and to accommodate yourself to them as much as possible, without breaking through your good designs. These compliances will be pleasing to our Lord. I told you so before: the less we live as we please, and the less of our own choice there is in our actions, the more goodness and solidity of devotion there will be.

Sometimes it happens that we are forced to leave our Lord to oblige others for the love of Him. For

we ought, if possible, to hinder ourselves from making our devotion annoying to others. Now I will tell you what you should do. When you can receive holy communion without troubling your two superiors, do it, according to the advice of your confessors. When you are afraid of troubling them, be content with communicating in spirit; and believe me, this spiritual mortification, this privation of God, will be extremely pleasing to God, and will bring Him into your heart long before.

I have often admired the extreme resignation of St. John Baptist, who abode so long in the desert, very near to our Lord, without hastening to see Him, to go and hear Him, and to follow Him: and how is it, that after having seen and baptised Him, he can let Him go, without attaching himself to Him by bodily presence, as he was already so closely united to Him by the presence of the heart? But he knew that he was serving this same Lord by means of this privation of His bodily presence.

I wish to say that for a time you will serve God, if to gain the souls of those two superiors whom He has given you, you suffer the privation of real communion; and it will be to me a very great consolation, if I know that this advice which I give you does not put your heart into disquietude. Believe me, this resignation, this abnegation of self, will be extremely useful to you.

You will, nevertheless, be able to gain secret opportunities for receiving holy communion; for, provided that you defer to and compassionate the wills of these two persons, and avoid giving them occasion of impatience, I give you no other rule for your communions than what your confessors shall tell you; for they see the present state of your soul, and will know what is required for your good.

## PART THIRD.

## DUTIES TOWARDS OURSELVES.

## CHAPTER I.

## OF SELF-LOVE.

SELF-LOVE may be mortified in us, but it, notwithstanding, never dies; on the contrary, from time to time, and on different occasions, it shoots forth germs in us which shew that although it may be cut off at the stalk, it is not yet rooted up.

This is the reason why we have not the consolation which we ought to have when we see others doing well; for what we do not see in ourselves is not so pleasant to us, and what we do see in ourselves is extremely dear to us, because we love ourselves tenderly and profoundly.

This same self-love makes us well enough disposed to do this or that by our own choice; but we would not wish to do it by the choice of another person, or in the way of obedience. It is always ourselves; we seek ourselves, our own will, and our own self-love.

On the contrary, if we had the perfection of the love of God, we should be better pleased to do what we are commanded to do, because that comes more from God and less from ourselves.

As to our taking more pleasure in doing difficult things than in seeing them done by others, this may either arise from charity, or because our self-love secretly fears lest the others equal or surpass us.

Sometimes we are more pained at seeing others ill-treated than ourselves, from kindness of disposition : sometimes it is because we fancy that we are more courageous than they, and that we should bear the misfortune better than they could, according to the good opinion we have of ourselves. The indication of this is, that generally we had rather have little evils ourselves than allow others to have them ; but as for great ones, we had rather others should have them than we.

After all, know that what you have mentioned are only feelings of the inferior part of the soul ; for I am well assured that the superior part of it disavows all that. The only remedy is to disarm such feelings, invoking obedience, and protesting that we wish to love it, notwithstanding all repugnance, more than that which is of our own choice, praising God for the good which we see in others, and entreating Him to continue it.

We must in nowise be astonished to find self-love in our hearts, for it never leaves us. Like the crafty fox, it sometimes pretends to be asleep, and then all at once wakes up ; and for this reason we ought constantly to have an eye to it, and with all sweetness to defend ourselves against it. But if now and then it wounds us, we are healed by merely recalling what it has made us say, and disavowing what it has made us do. These sallies of self-love ought to be neglected. By disavowing them two or three times a day, one gets rid of them. There is no occasion to reject them by force of arms ; one need only say the little word " no."

## CHAPTER II.

THAT WE MUST NOT BE DISCOURAGED AT FEELING THE  
ATTACKS OF SELF-LOVE.

I see in your letter a great reason for blessing God on behalf of your soul, in that it retains holy indifference in effect though not in feeling. There is nothing in all this that you tell me of your little sallies. These little surprises of passion are inevitable in this mortal life; for it is on their account that the great apostle cries to heaven, *Unhappy man that I am!* (Rom. vii. 23, 24.) I feel two men within me, the old and the new; two laws, the law of the senses and the law of the spirit; two operations, that of nature and that of grace. *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Self-love never dies but with our bodies. We must always feel its sensible attacks or its concealed stratagems whilst we are in this exile; it suffices if we do not consent to it with a wilful, deliberate, settled, and admitted consent: and this virtue of holy indifference is so excellent, that our old man and the sensitive part of the soul, and human nature according to its natural faculties, was not capable of it even in our Lord, who, as a child of Adam, although exempt from all sin, and from all that belonged to it, in the sensitive part of His soul, and according to His human faculties, was in nowise indifferent, but desired not to die on the cross; indifference and its exercise being all reserved to the spirit, to the supreme part of the soul, to the faculties enkindled by grace, and finally to Himself, in that He was the new Adam.

Remain, then, in peace. When it happens to us to break the laws of indifference in indifferent things, by the sudden sallies of self-love and of our passions,

let us, as soon as we can, prostrate our heart before God ; let us say in a spirit of confidence and of humility, Lord, have mercy on me, for I am weak ; let us rise up in peace and tranquillity, make fast once more the thread of our indifference, and then go on with our work.

We ought not either to break the chords or throw aside the lute, when we perceive a discord ; we must apply our ear to perceive whence comes the disarrangement, and gently stretch or loosen the chord as the art prescribes.

I confess before Heaven and the angels, that you are precious to me as myself ; but that does not take from me the very fixed resolution of entirely acquiescing in the divine will. We wish to serve God in this world, here and there : if He judges it better that we should be in this world or in the other, His most holy will be done.

### CHAPTER III.

#### OF ONE'S OWN JUDGMENT.

You wish to know whether it is a thing contrary to perfection, to be subject to have opinions of one's own ? To which I reply, that it is a thing which is neither good nor bad, because it is all natural. Every one has opinions of his own. What we must avoid is, attaching ourselves to them and loving them ; because that attachment and that love are very contrary to perfection ; and this is what I have said so often, that the love of our own judgment, and the value which we set on it, is the cause why there are so few perfect souls.

There are many people to be found who will renounce their own will, some on one subject, and others on another ; I do not say only in religion, but

amongst seculars, and even in the courts of princes. If a prince gives any orders to a courtier, he will never refuse to obey; but it very rarely happens that he will confess that the order was right. No one can doubt that this is very contrary to perfection, because it generally produces disquietudes of spirit, caprices, and murmurs; and finally, it nourishes the love of one's own esteem.

The great St. Thomas, who had as great a capacity as it is possible to have, when he formed opinions, supported them on the most solid reasons he could; and nevertheless, if he met any one who did not approve of what he had judged to be good, or contradicted it, he never disputed with him, or was offended at it, but bore with it cheerfully; by which he shewed that he was by no means attached to his own opinions, although he did not disapprove of them. He left things so, whether people thought it good or not; after having done his duty, he did not trouble himself with the rest.

If superiors were to change their opinions in every conversation, they would be regarded as careless and imprudent in their government; but, on the other hand, if those who are not in office were to be attached to their own opinions, wishing to maintain them, and to make people accept them, they would be esteemed self-opinionated. For it is very certain that the love of our own opinion degenerates into this, if it is not faithfully mortified and cut down.

All the difference that exists between those who have a charge over others and those who have not, is, that the former can and ought to form opinions, in order to maintain a uniform conduct; whilst the latter may dispense with them, having nothing to do but obey; but if they do form them, they ought not, any more than the others, to attach themselves to them.

There are some persons of great talents, and at the same time excellent people, but who are so subject to their own opinions, and think them so good, that they are never disposed to loose hold of them. There are also minds of great capacity who are not subject to this defect, and who very readily renounce their opinions, even though they are very good : they do not arm themselves to defend them when they are contradicted. Melancholic persons are only more liable to this defect than those who are of a cheerful temperament.

To mortify this inclination, we should cut off its food. It is very true that we cannot hinder that first movement of complaisance which we feel when our opinion is approved and followed; but we must not amuse ourselves with this complaisance ; we must bless God, and then pass on without troubling ourselves with this feeling, any more than with a slight sense of pain that might come over us, if our opinion was not followed or thought good.

When we are required, either by charity or obedience, to give our advice on the subject that is under discussion, we must do it simply, making ourselves, for the rest, indifferent whether it is received or not. We must even sometimes express our views on the opinions of others, and shew the reasons on which we support our own ; but it is necessary that this should be done modestly and humbly, without despising the advice of others, or disputing to have our own received.

The matter being decided, we must say no more about it, especially with those who were of our way of thinking ; for that would be to nourish this defect, and to shew that we have not completely submitted to the advice of the others, and that we always prefer our own. We must not even think about it

any more, unless the resolution taken is remarkably faulty; for in that case, if any means could still be found to prevent its execution, or to apply a remedy to it, we ought to adopt such means in the most charitable and quiet way we can, so as not to trouble any one, or to bring into contempt what they thought good.

The love of our own opinion is the last thing that we part with; and nevertheless it is one of the most necessary to part with, for the acquisition of true perfection; for otherwise we do not acquire holy humility, which forbids and prevents us from making any account of ourselves, or of anything that depends upon us; and consequently, if we have not the practice of this virtue to a considerable degree, we shall always be thinking better of ourselves than we deserve, and imagining that others moreover owe us the same deference.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### OF THE MORTIFICATION OF ONE'S OWN JUDGMENT.

You ask me what must be done to bring about the death of our own judgment. To which I reply, that to make an end of it, we only have to sever it from all sorts of discourses and occasions where it wants to make itself master, taking care to let it know that it is but the servant; for it is only by reiterated acts that we acquire the virtues, although there are some of them that God gives all at once in a moment.

Therefore, whenever you feel tempted to judge whether a matter was rightly or wrongly ordered, sever this reflection from your own judgment: and when, a little after, you are told that you must do such a thing in such a way, do not amuse yourself with reasoning or determining whether it would not

be better otherwise, but persuade your judgment that the thing could not be better done than is commanded.

I have never met a person who made no account at all of his own judgment, except two, who confessed to me that they were destitute of judgment. We have in our own days a very remarkable instance of the mortification of a man's own judgment: I allude to that of a great doctor, enjoying a great reputation, who having composed a book on dispensations and decrees, and this book having fallen into the hands of the Pope, his Holiness judged that it contained erroneous propositions, and wrote concerning them to that doctor, that he should strike them out of his book.

The doctor receiving that order, submitted his judgment so absolutely, that he would never attempt to justify himself; on the contrary, he thought that he was in the wrong, and had allowed his own judgment to be deceived; and ascending the pulpit, he read out the Pope's letter, and then stated that what the Pope had judged was extremely well judged, and that with his whole heart he approved of the censure.

This learned man was under no obligation to do this, since the Pope did not require him to do any thing but cancel some passages which were not heretical, nor so manifestly erroneous as not to admit of defence; and in this he shewed great virtue and an admirable mortification of his own judgment.

We often enough see the senses mortified, because one's own will is interested in mortifying them; and it would be a shameful thing to shew ourselves obstinate when we ought to obey. What would people say of us? But we rarely find any persons thoroughly mortified in their own judgment. To confess that what is commanded us is good, to love it, to esteem

it as a thing which is good for us and useful above every thing else ; oh, here it is that the judgment proves obstinate. Many say, " I will do so and so, and in the way that you tell me ; but I see clearly that it would be better otherwise."

Alas, what are you doing, if you thus feed your own judgment? Without doubt it will intoxicate you ; for there is no difference between a person intoxicated, and one who is full of his own judgment. Nabal having refused provisions to David and to his attendants, on one occasion when he was flying from before Saul, Abigail, the wife of Nabal, to appease the anger of David, who would have devastated Nabal's possessions with fire and sword, excused her husband by saying that he was drunken and senseless. It is necessary to make the same excuses for him who is full of his own judgment as for a drunken person ; for the one is no more capable of reason than the other. It is necessary, then, to check our own judgment from making its considerations, that it may not intoxicate us with its reasons, above all in matters regarding obedience.

## CHAPTER V.

### OF OVER-GREAT TENDERNESS FOR ONE'S SELF.

You ask me if the tenderness which we have for ourselves is a great hindrance to us in the path of perfection.

To understand this, we must remember that there are in us two sorts of love : the affective love, and the effective love. To explain the difference between these two sorts of love, theologians are accustomed to avail themselves of the comparison of a father who has two sons, one of whom is yet a child, but amiable and of good promise ; and the other is a grown man,

brave and generous. The father greatly loves these two sons, but with a different kind of love ; for he loves the one who is still a child with a love extremely tender and affective ; he caresses him, he kisses him, he holds him on his knees and in his arms with an incomparable sweetness, as well for himself as for the child : suppose this child has been stung by a bee, the father never ceases to soothe him until the pain is abated. If his eldest son had been stung by a hundred bees, he would not deign to turn his head round, although he loves him with a love mightily strong and solid.

Consider, I pray you, the difference of these two loves. For although you have seen the tenderness of this father for his little one, he nevertheless does not give up forming the intention of sending him away from the house, destining his eldest son to be his heir and the successor to his property. The latter, therefore, is loved with an effective love, and the former with an affective love. Both the one and the other are loved, but in a different way.

The love which we have for ourselves is, in like manner, either effective or affective. Effective love is that which stirs and drives to action those who are ambitious of honours and riches, who never say, It is enough. Affective love applies to those who are very tender over themselves, who do nothing but complain, and who are so afraid of any thing hurting them, that it is lamentable to observe them. If they are sick, though perhaps it is but the tip of their finger that aches, nobody suffers so much as they do, or is so miserable ; no sickness is to be compared to that which they suffer, and one cannot find physicians enough to attend to them. They never cease phisicking themselves, and whilst they think to preserve their health, they lose and ruin it entirely. If others

are sick, it is nothing, it is only themselves who have a right to complain, and they weep tenderly over themselves, to move others to compassion; they do not care whether we think them patient or not, provided we think them sick and afflicted.

Imperfections characteristic of children, and if I may venture to say so, of women, and of men who have effeminate souls; for these imperfections are never found in generous souls, and well-constituted minds never attend to these follies, which are only adapted to stop our progress in the path of perfection; and after that, not to be able to endure being thought feeble by others, is it not to be really so in a high degree?

This feebleness is much more insufferable in spiritual than in bodily things; and nevertheless it is unfortunately most indulged in by spiritual persons, who would be saints all at once, without choosing to be at the expense even of the sufferings caused by those conflicts which the inferior part of the soul sustains from things painful to nature: however, whether we choose it or not, we must needs have the courage to suffer, in resisting these efforts all the days of our life, unless we wish to renounce the perfection which we have undertaken.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW WE MUST DESTROY THE OLD ADAM.

You ask me, How am I to destroy the old Adam? How? By punctual obedience to your rules. I assure you, on the part of God, that if you are faithful to do what they teach you, you will obtain the victory. Observe, I say, "to do;" because we do not acquire perfection by sitting with our arms folded; it is necessary to labour with one's whole

heart at conquering oneself, and to live according to reason, according to the rule, and according to obedience; and not according to the inclinations which we have brought with us from the world.

Religion tolerates our bringing with us our bad habits, passions, humours, and inclinations, but not that we should live according to their dictates. She gives us rules to serve as presses to our hearts, and to wring out from thence whatever is contrary to God. Live, then, courageously according to those rules.

But some sister will say to me, "How can I do that? I have not got the spirit of the rule." Certainly, I can easily suppose so. That is a thing which one does not bring with one out of the world into religion. The spirit of the rule is acquired by faithfully practising the rule. I say the same to you of holy humility and sweetness. God will infallibly give it to us, provided that we have a good heart, and do all in our power to acquire it. Blessed shall we be, if, a quarter of an hour before our death, we find ourselves clothed in that robe. The whole of our life will be well employed if we occupy ourselves in first sewing on one piece to it, and then another; for this holy habit is not made out of one piece only—it is requisite that it should have many.

You perhaps think that perfection is to be found ready-made, and that you only require to put it on, as you would put on a garment; but it is not so; it is necessary to make it yourself, and to clothe yourself with it.

You tell me that our sisters the postulants have a good will, but that they feel their passions so strong, that they are greatly afraid of yielding to them. Courage, my dear daughters: I have often said to you that religion is a school where a lesson is being learnt; the master does not always insist that his

scholars shall know their lesson without any mistake. Those who are learning to fence often fall ; and in the same way do those who are learning to ride on horseback ; but they do not for all that think themselves beaten. For it is one thing to fail sometimes, and another thing to be absolutely beaten. Because your passions make head sometimes, you say : I am not fit for religion. Oh, no ! for religion does not esteem it a great triumph to fashion a spirit ready-made, a sweet and tranquil soul ; but she reckons it of great price to reduce under the dominion of virtue souls strong in their inclinations ; for if these souls are faithful, they will outstrip the others, acquiring, as it were, at the sword's point of the spirit, what the others have without difficulty.

It is not required of you to be without passions, that is not in your power ; and God wills that you shall feel them up to the time of your death, for your greater merit ; nor is it even required that your passions should be not very strong, for that would be to say that a soul which has bad habits would not be fit for God's service ; in which the world deceives itself, for God rejects nothing of that which is free from malice. Wherein, I beseech you, is a person faulty for being of this or that temperament, subject to this or that passion ? All consists in the acts which we do by the movement of our will, sin being so voluntary, that without our consent there is no sin.

If it happens, then, that I am surprised by anger, I say to it : Away, begone ; burst thyself if thou wilt ; I will do nothing in thy favour, not even utter a word according to thy impulse. God has left this power in our hands ; otherwise, to demand of us perfection, would be to oblige us to an impossibility, and consequently to make an unjust demand, which cannot be found in God.

You are happy, my dear daughters, at the expense of us who are in the world. When we ask the road, one says to us, It is on the right; another says, It is on the left; and in the end they most generally deceive us; but as for you, you have only to allow yourself to be carried along, following faithfully your rules, and you will arrive happily at God.

You tell me that our sisters say: It is good to go by the rules; but that is the general way; God draws us by particular *attraits*; each has his own, we are not all drawn by the same road. They are right in saying so, and it is true: but it is also true, that if this *attrait* comes from God, it will doubtless conduct them to obedience. It does not belong to us inferiors to judge of our particular *attraits*; that is the duty of superiors; and for that end, particular direction is ordered. Be faithful to it, and you will reap from thence the fruits of benediction. If you do what you are told to do, you will be very happy, you will live contented, and you will experience, even in this world, the favours of Paradise, at least by little snatches.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OF MISTRUST IN OURSELVES, AND OF OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.

Do you perceive it often happens, that when we think we are entirely rid of the old enemies over whom we have formerly gained the victory, we see them come on a side where we expected them the least? Alas, that wisest man in the world, Solomon, who had done such marvels in his youth, and felt himself fully assured in his long habit of virtue, and in the confidence of the years he had gone through, when he seemed out of the reach of danger, he was surprised by the very enemy whom, in the ordinary course of things, he had the least reason to fear.

This was to teach us two important lessons: the one, that we ought always to mistrust ourselves, walk with a holy fear, ask continually the assistance of Heaven, live in a humble devotion; the other, that our enemies may be repelled, but not killed. They leave us sometimes at peace, but it is to make a stronger fight against us.

But notwithstanding all this, you must in nowise be discouraged; but on the contrary, with a peaceful courage, take time and pains to cure your soul of the evil which it may have sustained from these assaults, humbling yourself profoundly before our Lord, and by no means being astonished at your misery. Certainly it would be a thing worthy of astonishment, if we were not subject to these assaults and miseries.

These little shocks make us return unto ourselves, consider our fragility, and have recourse more earnestly to our Protector. St. Peter walked with great confidence on the waters, the wind arose, and the waves seemed to be swallowing him up; then he cried, *Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus, stretching forth His hand, took hold of him, and said to him: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?* (St. Matt. xiv. 30, 31.) It is amidst the troubles of our passions, the winds and storms of temptation, that we call upon the Saviour; for He never suffers us to be disturbed, but to incite us to call upon Him more fervently.

Lastly, do not distress yourself, or at least do not trouble yourself at having been troubled. Do not agitate yourself at having been agitated. Do not disquiet yourself at having been disquieted by these distressing passions; but take heart again, and place your heart sweetly in the hands of our Lord, entreating Him to heal it; and on your side do all that you can, by the renewal of your resolutions, by the reading of books adapted to effect this cure, and by other

suitable means ; and in this way you will gain much by your loss, and you will become the more whole by your sickness.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIPS.

I at length received the news which this good daughter whom you know sent me concerning the little disappointment she had had in the spiritual friendship of the person to whom she had given her confidence. Do not let her be at all astonished at this inconvenience ; for it is only the soil and rust which is wont to grow in the human heart on the most pure and sincere affections, if we do not take good heed against it.

Do we not see that the vines which produce the best fruit are the most subject to superfluities, and most require to be pruned and clipped ? Such is friendship, even spiritual friendship. But there is this also to be observed, that it is necessary that the hand of the vine-dresser who prunes them be the more delicate, in proportion to the slenderness and delicacy of the superfluities which grow there, which at their beginning one could hardly see, unless one rubbed one's eyes and looked very attentively. It is no wonder, then, if we are deceived in this.

But that daughter ought to bless God that this disappointment has happened to her in the commencement of her devotion ; for it is an evident sign that His Divine Majesty wishes to conduct her by His hand, and to make her, by means of escaping this danger, wise and prudent to avoid many other such.

O God, how rare it is to see fire without smoke ! although, indeed, the fire of celestial love has none, whilst it remains pure ; still, when it begins to inter-

meddle with other objects, it also begins to contract the smoke of disquietude, of irregularities, and of unruly movements of the heart. But God be praised that all is well settled and in a good state.

It is a characteristic of the friendships which Heaven forms in us, that they never perish, any more than the source from which they have issued dries up; and that presence does not nourish them, any more than absence makes them languish or come to an end, because their foundation is every where, which is God Himself.

For the rest, there was no harm in mentioning it in such a way that it would be understood who was alluded to, since it was impossible to tell it in any other way; and the discreet adviser of souls never finds any thing strange, but receives every thing with charity, compassionates every thing, and knows well that the mind of man is subject to vanity and disorder, except it be by a special assistance of the Truth.

It only remains for me to tell you, that the most assured path of devotion is that which is at the foot of the cross, that of humility, of simplicity, of sweetness of heart. May God be ever in your heart!

## CHAPTER IX.

### OF HUMILITY.

What is humility? Is it the knowledge of our misery and poverty? Yes, says St. Bernard; but that is human humility. What, then, is Christian humility? It is the love of this poverty and lowliness, in consideration of that of our Lord.

Know that thou art a creature, poor and little. Love to be such; glory in being nothing; be well content therewith, since thy misery serves for an

object to God's goodness on which to exercise His mercy.

Among the poor, those who are the most miserable, and whose wounds are the sorest and most pitiable, consider that they are the best poor, and the fittest to attract alms. We are nothing but poor people, the most miserable are of the best condition, and the mercy of God looks on them the most willingly.

Let us humble ourselves, I beseech you, and let us preach nothing but our wounds at the gate of the temple of Divine goodness. But remember to preach them joyfully, consoling yourself at being altogether empty, that God may satisfy you with His kingdom. Be sweet and affable to every one, except to those who would rob you of your glory, which is your misery. *I glory in my infirmities*, says the Apostle. (2 Cor. xii. 9.) *And to me to die is gain* (Phil. i. 21), rather than to lose my glory. Do you see he preferred rather to die than lose his infirmities, which are his glory?

You must take good care of your misery, your lowliness; for God takes care of it, as He did of that of the Holy Virgin. (St. Luke i. 48.) *Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart.* (1 Kings xvi. 7.) If He sees our lowliness in our heart, He will give us great graces.

This humility preserves chastity. This is why in the Canticles that beautiful soul is called the *lily of the valleys*. (Cant. ii. 1.) Keep yourself therefore cheerfully humble before God, but keep yourself equally cheerful and humble before the world. Be very content if the world makes no account of you. If it values you, cheerfully ridicule it, and laugh at its judgment, and at your misery which it accepts; if it does not value you, comfort yourself cheerfully on the ground that at least in this instance the world follows the truth.

As to your exterior, do not affect visible humility, but also do not avoid it. Embrace it, but always cheerfully. I approve of your sometimes humbling yourself to lowly services, even for inferiors and proud persons, for the sick and poor, for those about you in the house and out of it; but always do this with simplicity and cheerfulness. Offices of a humble kind, and belonging to exterior humility, are only the shell, but the shell preserves the fruit.

## CHAPTER X.

### OF THE SPIRIT OF HUMILITY.

To understand what is meant by the spirit of humility, it is necessary to know that, as there is a difference between pride, the habit of pride, and the spirit of pride, there is also a difference between humility, the habit of humility, and the spirit of humility.

If you do an act of pride, there is pride. If you do such acts on every occasion, and wherever you go, there is the habit of pride. If you take pleasure in those acts, and are on the look-out for them, there is the spirit of pride.

In the same way, if you do an act of humility, there is humility. If you do acts of humility on all occasions, and wherever you go, there is the habit of humility. If you take pleasure in humiliation, and are on the look-out for abjection in every thing, there is the spirit of humility.

It is therefore not sufficient, in order to have the spirit of humility, to do some acts of humility, nor even to do such often; it is further necessary, in all that we do, say, or desire, that our principal end should be to humble and abase ourselves, and that we should take pleasure in humiliation, and seek for abjection in all things.

It is a good practice of humility, never to look upon the actions of our neighbours, except to remark the virtues that are in them, but never their imperfections; for so long as we are not in charge of them, we must never turn our eyes, and still less our attention, on that side.

We must always put the best construction that we can upon what we see our neighbour do. In doubtful matters, we ought to persuade ourselves that what we noticed is not bad, but that it is our imperfections that cause such a thought to arise in our minds; that thus we may avoid rash judgments, which are a very dangerous evil, and for which we ought to have a sovereign detestation. In cases clearly wrong, we ought to have compassion for our neighbour, and humble ourselves for his defects as if they were our own, and pray God for his amendment with the same heart we should for our own, were we subject to the same defects.

But what can we do, you say, to acquire this spirit of humility?

Oh, there is no other way but frequent repetition of its acts. Humility makes us annihilate ourselves in all those things which are not necessary for our advancement in grace, such as good speaking, noble mien, great talents for the management of affairs, a great spirit of eloquence, and the like; for in these exterior things we ought to desire that others should succeed better than ourselves.

## CHAPTER XI.

### OF ABJECTION.

Love your abjection. But, say you, what means this, Love your abjection? for I but faintly comprehend it. Well, then, it is this. If you remain

humble, tranquil, sweet, full of confidence in the midst of this obscurity; if you do not make yourself impatient, or trouble yourself for all this, but with a good heart—I do not say gaily, but I do say freely and firmly—embrace this cross, and remain under these clouds, you will love your abjection. For what else is it to be abject but to be in obscurity? Love to be so for the love of Him who wishes you to be so, and you will love your own abjection. In Latin, abjection is called *humility*, and humility is called *abjection*; so that, when our Lady says, *Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid* (St. Luke i. 48), she means to say, *Because He hath had regard to my abjection and vileness.*

Nevertheless there is some difference between the virtue of humility and of abjection; because humility is the admission of one's abjection. Now the highest degree of humility is not only to admit one's abjection, but to love it; and it was to this that I exhorted you.

In order that I may make myself better understood, know that, among the evils that we suffer, there are some which are abject, and others which are honourable. Many accommodate themselves to honourable evils; few to abject ones. For example: Behold a Capuchin, all in rags and exposed to the cold; every one honours his ragged habit, and compassionates him in the cold. Behold a poor artisan, a poor widow, a poor scholar, who is situated in the same way: people scorn them, and their poverty is abject. A religious will suffer patiently the censure of his superior, and every one will call that mortification and obedience. A gentleman will suffer as much for the love of God, and people will call it weakness and a want of courage. Behold an abject virtue, and a despised suffering. Behold a man who

has a cancer in his arm, another has one in his face : the former conceals it, and has only the evil ; the latter cannot conceal it, and, together with the evil, he has the contempt and the abjection. Now I say that we must not only love the evil, but also the abjection.

More than this ; there are abject virtues, and there are honourable virtues. Generally speaking, patience, sweetness, mortification, simplicity among people of the world, these are abject virtues ; to give alms, to be affable, gracious, and prudent, are honourable virtues.

There are some actions belonging to the same virtue which are abject, and others which are honourable. To give alms and to pardon offences are actions of charity : the first is honourable, and the other is abject, in the eyes of the world. I am ill, and amongst people who get tired of me : behold abjection joined to the evil of sickness. Young ladies of the world, seeing me in the habit of a true widow, say that I am affecting to be devout ; and seeing me smile, however modestly, they say that I would still be sought after ; that nobody can suppose that I do not wish for more honour and consequence than I have, or that my love for my vocation is unmixed with regret. All these are morsels of abjection : to love all this, is to love one's own abjection.

Behold another instance of the same kind. We are going, my sisters and I, to visit the sick. My sisters send me to visit those who are the most miserable objects : behold an abjection according to the world. They send me to visit the less miserable objects : behold an abjection according to God ; for this, the latter visit, is, in the eyes of God, the less worthy of the two, and the former in the eyes of the world. Now I will love both the one and other when it shall

fall to my lot. Going to the most miserable, I will say: It is well said that I am abased. Going to the less miserable: It is well said; for I have not merit sufficient to make a more holy visit.

I make some mistakes; it renders me abject—that is good. I fall into uncontrolled anger; I am grieved for having offended God, and very glad that this proclaims me to be vile, abject, and miserable.

Nevertheless, take good heed to what I am about to say to you. Although we love the abjection which follows from the evil, we ought not for that reason to give up attempting to remedy the evil. I will do what I can not to have a cancer in my face; but if I have one, I will love the abjection of it: and in matters of sin we must adhere to this rule still more strongly. I have been irregular in this or that; I am grieved at it, although I embrace with a good heart the abjection which arises from it; and if one could be separated from the other, I would cherish dearly the abjection, and drive away the evil and the sin. Further, we must have regard to charity, which sometimes requires us to remove abjection for the edification of our neighbour; but in this case we must remove it from the eyes of our neighbour, who would be scandalised by it, but not from our heart, which would be edified by it.

Lastly, you wish to know what are the best kinds of abjection. I say to you that they are those which we have not chosen, and which are least agreeable to us; or, to express it better, those for which we have not much inclination; but, to speak precisely, those of our vocation and profession; as, for example, this married woman would choose any other sort of abjection except that which is attached to her state of life; that religious would obey any one else rather than her superioress; and for myself, I would rather

be reprimanded by a superioress in religion than by a father-in-law in my house. I say that to each person his own abjection is the best, and our choice takes from us a great part of our virtues. Who will give to us the grace to love our abjection well? No one can give it to us, but He who loved His own so well, that to preserve it He chose to die.

## CHAPTER XII.

### OF AFFLICTIONS.

Oh, how precious are those stones which seem so hard! All the palaces of the heavenly Jerusalem, so shining, so beautiful, so lovely, are made of these materials, at least in the mansions set apart for mankind; for in those of the angels, the buildings are indeed of another sort, but not of a material so excellent. And if envy could reign in the kingdom of eternal love, the angels would envy mankind two excellences, which consist in two sorts of suffering: the one is that which our Saviour endured on the cross for us, and not for them, at least so entirely; the other is that which men endure for our Lord: the suffering of God for man, and the suffering of man for God.

If you cannot make long prayers in your infirmities, turn your infirmities themselves into a prayer, by offering them to Him who hath so loved your infirmities, that *in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the joy of His heart*, as the Spouse saith, He will crown Himself and glorify Himself with them. (Cant. iii. 11.) We must leave to our sweet Lord that most loving disposal, with which He often bestows on us more good through labours and afflictions than through happiness and consolation.

You are surrounded with crosses. Now holy love

will teach you that, in imitation of the great Lover, you must be on the cross as though unworthy to suffer any thing for Him who endured so much for us, and with patience, so as not to come down from the cross till after your death, if it so pleases the eternal Father.

Here are indeed many fires. The fever, like a fire, scorches your body ; the fire, like a fever, burns your house. But I hope that the fire of heavenly love will so occupy your heart, that on all these occasions you will say, The Lord gave me my health and my house ; the Lord has taken away my health and my house : *as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done ; blessed be the name of the Lord.* (Job i. 21.)

But this impoverishes and greatly incommodes us, it is true. But *blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* (St. Matt. v. 3.)

You ought to have before your eyes the sufferings and the patience of Job, and look at that great prince seated on the dunghill. He had patience, and God at last gave him twice as much as he had before of temporal goods, and of eternal goods an hundred-fold. (Job xlii. 10.)

You are a daughter of Jesus Christ crucified. Well, then, how strange it would be if you did not partake in His cross! *I was dumb,* said David, *and I opened not my mouth, because Thou hast done it.* (Ps. xxxviii. 10.)

Oh, by how many painful occurrences do we pass on to that holy eternity! Cast your confidence and your thoughts wholly on God : He will take care of you, and will extend to you His favourable hand.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

It is the truth, that nothing can give us a deeper tranquillity in this world, than frequently to look upon our Lord in all the afflictions which came upon Him from His birth until His death ; for we shall there see so much scorn, calumny, poverty, need, abjection, pains, torments, injuries, and all sorts of bitterness, that, in comparison with it, we find out that we were wrong in calling by the name of affliction, pain, and contradiction, those little accidents which happen to us, and in desiring patience for such a trifling matter, since one little drop of modesty should amply suffice to support that which happens to us.

A heart which values and greatly loves Jesus Christ crucified, loves His death, His pains, His torments, His spittings, His insults, His hungerings, His thirstings, His ignominies ; and when such a heart happens to have some little participation in all these things, it trembles with joy on that account, and lovingly embraces them.

You ought, therefore, every day, not merely in meditation, but as you walk abroad, to take a view of our Saviour amidst the pains of our redemption, and consider what a happiness it will be for you to partake in them ; to consider on what occasion this blessing may be obtained, that is to say, to consider what contradictions you can have in all your desires, but above all, in those which shall seem to you the most just and lawful ; and then, with a great love of the cross and passion of our Lord, you ought to cry out with St. Andrew : “ O good cross ! so much beloved by my Saviour, when wilt thou receive me within thine arms ? ”

Do you not see that we are over-delicate in calling by the name of poverty a state in which we have neither hunger, nor cold, nor ignominies, but only some little obstacles in our designs.

Form well in your mind the idea of eternity, on which whoever frequently thinks, troubles himself very little about what happens in these three or four moments of mortal life.

What a grace, to be not only under the cross, but on the cross, and at least a little crucified with our Lord! Be of good courage, and convert necessity into virtue; and do not lose the opportunity of well shewing forth your love towards God in the midst of tribulations, as He will shew forth His towards us in the midst of thorns.

Do not in any wise be astonished if you do not yet see much progress either in your spiritual or your temporal affairs. God has concealed in the secret of His Providence the time in which He wills to hear you, and the way in which He will hear you; and perhaps He will hear you excellently, by not hearing you according to your thoughts, but according to His own.

Abide in peace in the fatherly arms of that most loving care which the heavenly Father and King has and will have for you, since you are all for Him, and no longer for yourself. Oh, how great a favour it is when He keeps back and preserves His bounties for life eternal!

This life is such, that we must needs eat more wormwood than honey; but He for whom we have resolved to maintain holy patience, in the face of all opposition, will give us the consolation of His spirit in its season. *Do not lose your confidence*, says the Apostle, *which hath a great reward. For patience is necessary for you: that, doing the will of God, you may*

*receive the promise. For yet a little, and a very little while, and He that is to come will come, and will not delay.* (Heb. x. 35-37.)

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

The recital of your sorrows touches me with compassion; but I see clearly that the end of them will be happy, since our good God is making you profit in His school, in which you are more watchful than formerly.

Courage, let us go forwards; let us go the whole length of these lowly valleys; let us live, cross in hand, with humility and patience.

What matters it to us whether God speaks to us among the thorns or among the flowers? But I do not remember that He has ever spoken among the flowers, though I remember right well that He has many times spoken among the deserts and briers.

Proceed then, and get over the ground in this stormy and dark time; and believe that the weather is better fitted for the journey than if the sun was pouring its ardent heat upon our heads.

O God! be of good courage. Light is not in our power, nor any other consolation except that which depends on our will; which being sheltered by the holy resolutions we have made, the great seal of the heavenly chancery being on your heart, there is nothing to fear.

We have no recompense without victory, and no victory without war. Take, therefore, courage, and convert your pain, which is without remedy, into matter of virtue. Often turn your eyes to our Lord, Who looks upon you, and beholds you in the midst

of your labours and distractions. He sends you succours, and blesses your afflictions.

You ought, on this consideration, patiently to take and sweetly to bear the vexations which come upon you, for the love of Him who only suffers this exercise for your good.

Lift up, therefore, your heart often to God, ask His aid, and make the happiness you derive from being dependent on Him your principal basis of consolation.

All subjects which pain you will be of slight importance, when you know that you have such a friend, so great a support and so excellent a refuge.

Raise your head to heaven, and see that not one of the mortals who are immortal there, arrived thither except by continual afflictions and troubles. Say often in the midst of your contradictions: This is the way to heaven, I see the port, and I am assured that the storms cannot hinder me from going thither.

Do not let us vex ourselves with our storms and tempests, which sometimes trouble our heart and take away our tranquillity.

Let us mortify ourselves to the very depths of our spirit; and provided that our dear spirit of faith is faithful, let us allow every thing to be overturned, and live in confidence.

Although every thing died within us, provided that God lives in us, what ought it to matter to us? Come, come, we are in a good road. Let us look neither to the right hand nor to the left: no, this is the best for us.

## CHAPTER XV.

THAT WE MUST SUFFER IN TRANQUILLITY AND LOVE.

We ought above all things to secure our 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 occasions of practising it occur daily ; for we shall never want contradictions in whatever place we are ; and if no one offered them to us, we should make them for ourselves.

My God, how holy and pleasing to God we should be, if we knew how to make good use of the opportunities of mortifying ourselves with which our vocation furnishes us ! for they are greater without doubt than amongst religious ; the misfortune is, that we do not make them profitable as they do.

Manage yourself with great care whilst your present infirmity lasts ; do not trouble yourself to force your mind to any exercise, except very gently. If you get tired with kneeling, sit down. If you have not sufficient power of attention to pray for half an hour, pray for a quarter only, or half a quarter. I beg of you to put yourself into the presence of God, and to bear your sorrows in His sight.

Do not restrain yourself when you would complain ; but I would have you do it to God with a filial spirit, as a tender infant would do to its mother ; for provided that it is done lovingly, there is no danger in complaining, nor in asking to be healed, nor in changing place, nor in procuring comfort ; only do all this with love and resignation in the arms of the most holy will of God. Do not trouble yourself about not making the acts of the different virtues well ; for, as I have told you, they may be very good, although made with languor, heaviness, and a kind of compulsion. You can only give to God what you have, and in this season of affliction you have no other actions to offer Him.

Your Beloved is now to you “a bundle of myrrh” (Cant. i. 12) ; do not weary of clasping it to your

breast : *My Beloved to me, and I to Him* (ibid. ii. 16) : He shall ever be in my heart. Isaias calls Him *a man of sorrows* (liii. 3). He loves sorrows, and those who have them. Do not trouble yourself to do much, but dispose yourself to suffer with love what you have to suffer. God will be propitious to you. Whether we languish, or *whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord* (Rom. xiv. 8), and *nothing shall be able to separate us from His holy love* (ibid. viii. 39), His grace assisting us. Never shall our heart live but in Him and for Him. He shall be for ever the God of our heart. (Ps. lxxii. 26.)

## CHAPTER XVI.

## HOW THE SAINTS LOOKED UPON CROSSES.

I go on this visit, where I see crosses of all kinds at every corner. My flesh murmurs at them, but my heart adores them. Yes, I salute you, little and great crosses, spiritual or bodily, exterior or interior ; I salute you, and kiss your foot, unworthy of your shadow.

May God sustain the feebleness of my shoulders, and load them not save with a little, only to make me know how poor a soldier I should be, if I saw the armies before me.

Let us allow the enemy to growl and roar at the gate, and all around us ; for God is in the midst of us, and in our heart, from whence He will not move, if it is pleasing to Him. *Lord, stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is far spent.* (Luke xxiv. 29.)

I will not say any thing more to you, either on the great abandonment of all things and of ourselves for God, or on the departure from our country and the house of our parents. No, I will not speak of these

things. May God vouchsafe to enlighten us, and to make us see His good pleasure ; for at the risk of all that is in us, we will follow it in whatever place it conducts us to. Oh, how good it is to be with Him, in what place soever !

I think of the soul of the good thief. Our Lord had said to him that he should be that day with Him in Paradise ; and his soul was no sooner separated from his body, than behold, He conducted it to hell. Yes ; for it was to be with our Lord, and our Lord descended to hell. It therefore went thither with Him. True God, what must that soul have thought in descending, and beholding those abysses before its interior eyes ! I think that it said with Job : *Who will grant me this, that Thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me till Thy wrath pass, and appoint me a time when Thou wilt remember me !* (Job xiv. 13.) And with David, *I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me.* (Ps. xxii. 4.)

No, whilst our resolutions live, I will not trouble myself. Whether we die, whether every thing be overturned, it matters not, provided that this holds firm.

The night is to us as the day, when God is in our heart ; and the day as the night, when He is not there.

There is no occasion to mention in confession those little thoughts which, like flies, pass and repass before your eyes, nor the insipidities of taste you feel ; for there is no sin in all this, only annoyance and inconvenience.

## CHAPTER XVII.

OF THE REPOSE WHICH OUR HEARTS OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE WILL OF GOD IN THE MIDST OF AFFLICTIONS.

Since my return from the visit, I felt some symptoms of fever. Our physician would not order me any

remedy except rest, and I obeyed him. You know also that the remedy I willingly order is tranquillity, and that I always forbid excitement. This is why, in this bodily repose, I have thought of the spiritual repose which our hearts ought to feel in the will of God, whatever portion it assigns to us. Let us live as long as it pleases God in this vale of miseries, with an entire submission to His holy and sovereign will. I thought the other day of what writers say concerning the halcyons, little birds which float on the waves of the sea. It is that they make nests so round and compact, that the water of the sea cannot penetrate them; only at the top is a small hole, through which they can breathe. In these nests they lodge their young, so that if the sea surprises them, they may swim securely, and float on the waves without filling or sinking; and the air which comes through the hole serves as counterpoise, and so balances these little balls or boats that they never overturn. Oh, how I wish that our hearts were as compact, and as well stopped on all sides, so that if the troubles and tempests of the world seized them, they might notwithstanding never penetrate them; and that there were no opening but on the side of heaven, to breathe unto our Saviour! And for whom would this nest be made? For the little ones of Him who made it for the love of God, for divine and heavenly affections. But whilst the halcyons build their nests, and their young are still too tender to bear the dashing of the waves, alas, God has care for them, and is pitiful to them, hindering the sea from seizing and wafting them away. O God! and therefore this sovereign goodness will secure the nest of our hearts for His holy love against all the assaults of the world, where He will defend us from being assailed. Oh, how I love those birds which are surrounded with

waters, live only on the air, and see only the sky! They swim like the fishes, and sing like birds; and what pleases me more is, that their anchor is thrown on high and not beneath, to steady them against the waves. May the sweet Jesus vouchsafe to make us such, that, surrounded with the world and the flesh, we may live in the spirit, that, among the vanities of the earth, we may always look to heaven; that, living among men, we may always praise Him with the angels; and that the security of our hopes may always be on high and in Paradise. Every where and in every thing may holy love be our great love. Alas, but when will it be that He shall consume us, and when shall our life be consumed, that He may make us die to ourselves and live again to our Saviour? To Him alone be for ever honour, glory, and benediction; since our inviolable purpose, and final and invariable resolution, tends incessantly to the love of God, words concerning the love of God are never out of place.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

#### OF FIRMNESS OF SPIRIT IN THE VARIOUS ACCIDENTS OF LIFE.

The want of this firmness is what leads us to discouragement and disquietude, to caprice of spirit, and to variety of humours, to inconstancy, to instability in our resolutions; for we would meet in our path with no difficulty, no contradiction, no pain; we would always have consolations without disgusts, goods without evils, health without sickness, rest without labour, and peace without trouble.

Who does not perceive our folly in this? for we would have what cannot be. It is only to be found in Paradise, where are all goods without admixture; but in this world every thing is mixed up. Thus

God has willed that summer should be followed by autumn, and winter by spring; and for want of attending to this truth, we are moveable and changeable in our humours; and we do not follow reason, which would render us firm and immoveable.

God, in creating our first father, not only made him master of the brute creation, by the gift which He gave him of reason, but He moreover gave him a full power over all the accidents of this life, according as it is written, the wise man, that is to say, he who conducts himself by reason, will overrule the stars; which means, that by the use of his reason, he will remain firm and constant in the diversity of the accidents of this life.

Whether the day be fair or whether it rain, whether the air is calm or the wind blows, the wise man is by no means startled at it, knowing well, as he does, that nothing is stable in this life, and that the place of our rest is not here. In affliction he does not despair, but he waits for consolation; in sickness he does not harass himself, but he waits for health; or if he sees that he shall not be cured, he blesses God, hoping for the rest of life everlasting. But if he falls into poverty, he does not afflict himself beyond measure, knowing well that it is the lot of this life; if he is despised, he has no excessive sadness on that account, knowing well that in this life honour is ordinarily followed by contempt. Lastly, in all sorts of events, whether prosperous or adverse, he remains firm, stable, and constant in the resolution of aiming at, and tending to, the enjoyment of eternal goods.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THAT WE MUST HAVE THIS SAME FIRMNESS IN WHAT REGARDS  
THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

This firmness is so much the more necessary in the spiritual life, as this life is elevated above the bodily life. It is a very great mistake not to be willing to suffer, or to feel changes in our humours, so long as we do not govern ourselves by reason, and will not allow ourselves to be governed.

Most people in the world allow themselves to be governed and conducted by their passions, and not by their reason; and consequently they are generally very changeable. If they feel an inclination to go to bed early or late, they do so; if to go into the country, they rise early in the morning; but if to sleep, they follow their inclination in the same way. When they wish to dine or to breakfast late or early, they do so also; and not only are they inconstant in this, but they are inconstant in their daily life and conversation. They wish that other people should accommodate themselves to their humours, but will not do the like with regard to those of others: they allow themselves to be carried away by their inclinations and particular affections, without its being considered among them as a fault.

This ought not to be so among persons who wish to labour for their salvation. You say to-day that you feel consolation, that you are thoroughly determined to serve God; and to-morrow that you do not feel this consolation, you have no heart for the service of God. But tell me, if you governed yourself by reason, would you not see that if it was good to serve God yesterday, it is also very good to serve Him to-day? for He is always the same God, as worthy of

being loved when you are not in consolation as when you are. To-day I like a person better, and am greatly pleased with his conversation, and to-morrow I can scarcely endure him. What means this? Is he not as capable of being loved to-day as he was yesterday? If we regarded the dictates of reason, we should see that we ought to love this person because he is a creature who bears the image of the divine Majesty: so shall we have as much pleasure in his conversation to-day as we had yesterday.

All this comes from allowing oneself to be conducted by one's inclinations and affections, thus inverting the order placed within us by God, who would have every thing submitted to reason; for if reason does not rule over all our powers, nothing will be seen in us but a continual vicissitude and inconstancy, making us sometimes fervent, and then a while after cowardly and lazy; sometimes joyous, and then sad; we shall be tranquil for an hour, and then disquieted for a couple of days; and thus our life will slip away in unprofitableness and loss of time, whilst we allow ourselves to be subject to unevenness of humour amidst the unevenness of the circumstances which occur; instead of submitting ourselves to the guidance of that reason which God has placed in us, and which would render us firm, constant, and invariable in the resolution which we have made of serving God constantly, courageously, ardently, and without interruption.

## CHAPTER XX.

EXAMPLE OF THIS FIRMNESS AFFORDED BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND ST. JOSEPH.

O man, says the great St. Chrysostom, why troublest thou thyself for that all things do not turn out as thou desirest? Art thou not ashamed to see that

what thou wouldst have was not even found in the family of our Lord? Consider, I beseech thee, the vicissitude, the changefulness, and the diversity of the things that happened there.

The Blessed Virgin receives the tidings that she was to conceive of the Holy Ghost a Son who should be our Lord and Saviour: what joy for her in that holy hour of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word! A while after, St. Joseph perceives she was with child. O God! what sorrow for her, beholding her beloved spouse about to abandon her, whilst her humility would not allow her to disclose the honour and the grace which God had bestowed upon her!

A little after this storm had passed away, what consolation did they not receive, when the Son of God having come into the world, the angels proclaim His birth, the shepherds and the wise men come to adore Him! But, a little time after, the angel of the Lord comes to say in a dream to St. Joseph: Take the young Child and his Mother, and fly into Egypt; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him. Oh, this was without doubt an occasion of very great sorrow to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

In these various events, what constancy and what firmness! They reply not a single word. Might not St. Joseph have said, You tell me that I must go; will it not be time enough to-morrow morning? Whither do you wish me to go to-night? How would you have me carry the Infant? I have neither provisions nor money for the journey: you know that the Egyptians are enemies of the Israelites. Who will receive us? And similar things, which we might easily have urged to the angel, had we been in the place of St. Joseph, who did not say one word to excuse himself from obedience, but de-

parted the same hour, and did every thing the angel had commanded him.

The Blessed Virgin conducted herself on this occasion in the same manner as St. Joseph. For she might have said to her spouse : Wherefore should I go into Egypt, since my Son has not revealed it to me? Even the angel did not speak to me of it. But the holy Virgin kept silence on all this, and is not in the least offended that the angel had addressed himself to St. Joseph ; on the contrary, she obeys in all simplicity, because she knows that God has so ordained it, and takes no thought : “ But I am more than an angel,” she might have said, “ more than St. Joseph.” There was nothing of all this.

Consider, then, whether we have reason to trouble ourselves and to be astonished, if similar things happen to us, since the case was thus with the family of our Lord, where firmness and solidity made its very abode, which was our Lord Himself. It is a rule which we must say and re-say many times, the better to engrave it into our souls, that the inequality of accidents ought never to lead our minds and spirits to an inequality of humour : for inequality of humour arises from no other source than our passions, inclinations, or unmortified affections, which ought not to have any power over us, when they would lead us to do or to leave undone any thing contrary to that which reason tells us we should do or leave undone in order to please God.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OF PATIENCE IN SICKNESSES AND INFIRMITIES.

Certainly, I see plainly you will henceforth have to familiarise yourself with sicknesses and infirmities at this declining time of life you have reached.

Lord Jesus, what true happiness for a soul dedicated to God, to be much exercised with tribulation before it departs from this life! How can one know free and ardent love, save among thorns, crosses, and languors, and above all, when the languors abide long? Thus our dear Saviour has shewn us His unmeasured love by the measure of His labours and sufferings.

Shew well your love to the Spouse of your heart on the bed of sorrow; for thereon, even before His Incarnation, He fashioned your heart, as yet seeing it only in His divine design. Alas, this Saviour has reckoned up all your sorrows, all your sufferings, and has paid at the price of His own blood for all the patience and all the love which is necessary for you, in order to apply your labours in a holy manner to His glory and your salvation.

Take comfort in the consideration that it is God who sends you these crosses; for nothing comes from that divine hand except for the profit of the souls that fear Him, either to purify them, or to confirm them in His holy love.

Happy are you, if you receive with a heart of filial love that which our Lord sends you with a heart of such fatherly care for your perfection.

Often look to the duration of eternity, and do not trouble yourself with the accidents of the life of this mortality.

If you have little of gold or incense to offer to our Lord, you at least have myrrh; and I perceive that He accepts it with great favour, as if this fruit of life wished to be preserved in the myrrh of bitterness, as well in its birth as in its death.

Jesus glorified is fair; but although He is always very good, it seems nevertheless as if He were more so when crucified. In this way is He for this present

time your Spouse ; in the future it will be His glorified Self.

On what occasions could we make the great acts of the invariable union of our heart with the will of God, of the mortification of our own love, and of the love of our own abjection, if not on these ?

It is God who wills thus to exercise our heart. It is not then a rigour, it is a sweetness. Let not our will be done ; but let His all-holy will be done.

Let us be of good courage ; for, provided that our heart be faithful to Him, He will not load us above our strength, but will support our burden with us, when He sees with what readiness we place our shoulders to it. (Is. xl. 11.)

I have at heart your advancement in solid piety ; and this advancement has its difficulties, in order that you may be exercised in the school of the cross, in which alone our souls can perfect themselves. It is not with spiritual rose-trees as with material ones. In the latter, the thorns remain, and the roses pass away ; in the former, the thorns will pass away, and the roses will abide.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

I think that you are ill of a complaint more troublesome than dangerous, and I know that such sicknesses are apt to spoil the obedience due to physicians ; which is the reason why I wish to tell you that you must spare neither rest, nor medicines, nor food, nor the recreations which are ordered you. You will in this practise a sort of obedience and resignation, which will render you extremely pleasing to our Lord. For behold, indeed, here is a number of crosses and mortifications, which you have not

chosen nor willed. God has given them to you with His holy hand; receive them, kiss them, love them. My God! they are all perfumed with the dignity of the place from whence they come.

To God be the praise of the exercise which His providence gives you by this affliction of sickness, which will render you holy by means of His holy grace; for you know that you will never be the spouse of Jesus glorified, if you have not first been the spouse of Jesus crucified; and you will never enjoy the nuptial couch of His love triumphant, if you have not felt the love afflicting of the couch of His holy cross.

I assure you that I would willingly bear in my body, as I bear in my heart, all the pains you shall suffer in your illness; but not being able thus to get rid of them, embrace in a holy manner these little mortifications, receive these humiliations in the spirit of resignation, and, if possible, of indifference. Accommodate your imagination to reason, your natural feeling to understanding; and love this will of God in these cases, disagreeable in themselves, as if that will were exhibited in cases the most agreeable to you.

You do not receive the remedies by your own choice or from a liking for them: it is therefore by obedience and by reason. Can any thing be so pleasing to the Saviour? But there is humiliation; and so many Saints have suffered the like as a cross. O cross! thou art lovely, since neither sense nor nature loves thee, but only the superior reason.

My heart salutes yours filially, and more than filially, beyond all comparison. Be like the dove, simple, sweet, and amiable, without reply and without deceit. May God bless you, and ever may our hearts be in Him and for Him. Do not occupy your mind with business, but receive humbly and sweetly

the little indulgences your infirmity requires. Live, Jesus and Mary!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## OF PATIENCE WHEN SUFFERING FROM HEADACHE.

Let us lay aside meditation for a little, by reason of your headache, and let us practise well that holy resignation and that courageous love of our Saviour, which is never practised so completely as amidst torments.

For to love God in sugared sweetness, little children could easily do as much; but to love Him in wormwood, there is the trial of our loving fidelity.

To say "Live, Jesus!" on Thabor, St. Peter, rough as he was, had easily the courage; but to say "Live, Jesus!" on Calvary, that belongs only to the Mother and to the beloved disciple, who was left to her as her son.

But observe that I recommend you to God to obtain for you this holy patience; and it is not in my power to propose to Him any thing for you, except that He altogether at His will fashion your heart, to dwell there and to reign there eternally; that He fashion it, I say, either with the hammer or the chisel or the brush: it is with Him to use them according to His pleasure.

I know that your sufferings have lately increased, and in the same measure my sympathy for you, although with you I praise and bless our Lord for His good pleasure which He exercises in you, making you participate in His holy cross, and crowning you with His crown of thorns.

But, you tell me, you can scarcely keep your thoughts fixed on the woes which our Saviour suffered for you, whilst the pain is at its worst. Well

then, it is not necessary that you should do so, but that with all simplicity you should raise your heart as often as you can to this Saviour, and make the following acts:—

1. Accept this pain from His hand, as if you saw Himself imposing it on you, and fixing it on your head: 2. Offer yourself to suffer yet more of it: 3. Entreat of Him, by the merit of His torments, to accept of these little inconveniences in union with His sufferings on the cross: 4. Protest that you not only love to suffer, but love and caress these evils, as sent by so good and kind a hand: 5. Invoke the martyrs and those many servants of God, men and women, who enjoy heaven for having been afflicted in this world.

There is no danger in desiring a remedy; on the contrary, you ought diligently to seek for one: for God, who has given you the affliction, is also the author of remedies.

You must then apply them; but with such resignation, that if His Divine Majesty wills that the disease be subdued, you acquiesce in that: if He wills that the remedy fail, you bless Him for it.

My God! how happy you will be, if you continue to hold yourself under God's hand, humbly, sweetly, and submissively.

Ah! I hope that this affliction of your head will do great good to your heart. It is now more than ever, and by an excellent token, that you are enabled to shew to our sweet Saviour that it is with all your affection that you have said, and continue to say, *Live, Jesus!*

Live, Jesus! and may He reign amidst our sorrows, since we cannot reign or live except by those of His death.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

If God has rendered you stronger and more valiant in supporting your adversities, to His goodness be the glory, which is ever ready to receive those souls who hope in Him.

Hope, then, always in Him ; and in order to hope in Him, be always with Him. Often sacrifice your heart to His love, even on the altar of the cross, on which He sacrificed His for the love of you. The cross is the royal gate by which to enter into the temple of holiness. He who seeks for it in another way will never find a fraction of it.

I will not say to you that you must not regard your afflictions at all; for your spirit, which is ready with replies, would say to me that they oblige you to regard them by the severity of the pain which they give you : but I will plainly tell you that you must not regard them except through the medium of the cross, and you will find them either little, or at least so pleasing that you will love to suffer them, rather than enjoy all consolation apart from them.

And calling to mind that outward cross which you carry on your heart, I say to you : Love well your cross ; for it is all of gold, if you regard it with your eyes of love : and although on the one side you see the love of your heart dead and crucified amidst nails and thorns, you will find on the other an assemblage of precious stones to compose the crown of glory which awaits you, if you meanwhile lovingly carry that crown of thorns with your King, who has willed to suffer so much to enter into His felicity.

May our dear crucified Jesus rest, then, for ever on your heart. Yes, for the nails are more desirable

than violets, and the thorns than roses. My God! how I desire that you should be holy, and all odiferous with the perfumes of our dear Saviour!

The Our Father which you say for your headache is not forbidden; but, my God! no, I could not have the courage to pray of our Lord, by the thorns which wounded His brow, that in my head I should suffer no pain at all. Did He endure in order that we might not endure at all? St. Catharine of Sienna, seeing that her Saviour presented two crowns to her, one of gold, the other of thorns, said: Oh! I would have the crown of suffering for this world; the other shall be for heaven. I would wish to employ the crowning of our Lord to obtain a crown of patience for the pains of headache which I suffer.

Live wholly among the thorns of the Saviour's crown, and say always, Live, Jesus! The thorns are wonderfully painful to flesh and blood; but the repugnance which you feel does not at all shew any deficiency in love. For I imagine, if we thought He would love us the more for it, we would submit even to be flayed alive, not indeed without repugnance, but in spite of repugnance.

You know that the fire which Moses saw on the mountain typified this holy love; and as its flames fed themselves amidst the thorns, so the exercise of divine love maintains itself much more happily amidst tribulations than amidst comfort. You have, then, an excellent opportunity of perceiving that our Lord desires that you should make progress in His love, since He gives you an uncertain state of health, and many other trials. My God! how sweet a thing it is to see our Lord crowned with thorns on the cross, and with glory in heaven: for this encourages us to receive contradictions lovingly, knowing well that by the crown of thorns we shall arrive at the crown of

felicity. Keep yourself always close to our Lord, and you cannot have any evil which will not turn to some good.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### OF PATIENCE UNDER PAINFUL OPERATIONS.

Our Lord wishes to give you His Holy Spirit, to do and to suffer all things according to His holy will.

You tell me that incisions are to be made in your leg: this will no doubt give you extreme torture. But, O my God! what an opportunity does not His goodness give you of trial in these commandments! Oh, take courage; we are in the service of Jesus Christ. He is sending us His livery. Think that the iron which makes the incisions in your leg is one of the nails which pierced the feet of our Lord.

Oh, what an honour! He chose these favours for Himself, and cherished them so much that He carried them into Paradise, and behold He gives you a share in them. But you tell me that you cannot serve God on this bed of torture; and I reply to you: When was it that our Lord rendered the greatest service to His Father? Doubtless, when He was stretched on the tree of the cross, having His hands and feet pierced. There was His greatest act of service.

And how did He serve Him? By suffering and sacrifice. These sufferings were an odour of sweetness to His Father. Behold, then, the service you shall render to God upon your bed: you shall suffer, and offer your sufferings to His majesty. He will doubtless be with you in this tribulation, and will console you.

Here has your cross come in sight; embrace it, and welcome it for the love of Him who sends it to you. David in his affliction said to God: *I was dumb,*

*and I opened not my mouth, because Thou hast done it* (Ps. xxxviii. 10); as though he should say: If another than Thou, O my God, had sent me this affliction, I would not love it, I should reject it; but since it is Thou, I say not a word more, I accept it, I receive it, I honour it.

But here is a precious balm to soothe your woes. Take each day a drop or two of that blood which trickles from the wounds of the feet of our Lord; meditate on them; and in your imagination dip reverently your finger in that blood, and apply it to your sore, with the invocation of the sweet name of Jesus, and you will see that your pain will diminish.

The obedience which you shall render to the physician will be very pleasing to God, and will be reckoned at the day of judgment.

Whilst you lie in pain on your bed, I will regard you with particular reverence and extraordinary honour, as a person visited by God, habited in His robes, and as His special spouse.

When our Lord was on the cross, He was declared King, even by His enemies; and the souls which are on crosses are declared queens.

St. Paul, who had been in heaven and amidst the felicities of Paradise (2 Cor. xii. 4), regards himself as happy only in his infirmities and in the cross of our Lord. (Gal. vi. 14.)

When the incisions are made in your leg, say with the same Apostle: *From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me; for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.* (Ibid. 17.)

O leg, which well employed, will carry you further towards heaven than if it were the soundest limb in the world! Paradise is a mountain, which is easier ascended by broken and wounded legs than by those sound and whole.

It is not good to have Mass said in your chamber ; adore our Lord at the altar from your bed, and be content. Daniel not being able to go to the temple, turned himself towards it to adore God. Do you the same. (Dan. vi. 10.) But I decidedly recommend you to receive holy communion in your bed on all Sundays and greater festivals, as often as the physicians allow you. Our Lord will willingly visit you on the bed of affliction.

May God be eternally blessed and glorified through you, in you, and by you.

I beg of you to have the goodness to cause a good work to be recommended to God which I am anxious to see accomplished, and above all to recommend it yourself during your sufferings : for at such times your prayers, although short and ejaculatory, will be wonderfully well received. Ask of God at the same time to grant you the virtues which are most necessary for you.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ON THE MAXIM—ASK FOR NOTHING, AND REFUSE NOTHING.

I was speaking one day to an excellent religious, who asked me whether, supposing she wished to receive holy communion oftener than the community did, she might ask permission of the superioress to do so.

I replied to her, that if I were a religious, I think I should conduct myself as follows : I would never ask to communicate oftener than the community ; nor would I ask to wear the hair-shirt or the cincture, or to use extraordinary fasts or disciplines, or any thing else : I would be content with following the community in every thing. If I were strong, I would not eat four times a day ; but if I were ordered to do so,

I would obey, and say nothing. If I were in weak health, and were ordered notwithstanding to eat only once a day, I would eat only once a day, without thinking whether I was in weak health or not.

I wish for little ; what I do wish for, I wish very little for. I have scarcely any desires for what regards this world ; but if I were to be born again, I would not wish to have any of them at all. If God came to me by consolations, I would also go to Him ; but if it were His will not to come to me by consolations, I would acquiesce, and would not go to Him to press Him to give me them ; for He knows better than I what is necessary for me.

I say, then, that one ought to ask for nothing, and refuse nothing ; but leave oneself in the hands of divine Providence, without amusing oneself with any desire, except to wish for that which God wishes of us.

You ask me if one ought not to desire virtues ; and you tell me that our Lord has said : Ask, and it shall be given you. Oh, when I say that one ought to ask for nothing and desire nothing, I mean for things of the earth : for as regards the virtues, we ought certainly to ask for them ; and when we ask for the love of God, we include them in it, for it contains them all.

But you add, cannot one desire human employments and offices of a lowly description, because they are more painful, and afford an opportunity of doing more, and humbling ourselves more, for the sake of God ?

I reply that David said that he chose to be an abject in the house of his God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacle of sinners : this desire notwithstanding is very much to be suspected. How do you know, if, having desired humble offices, you will have strength

to accept the humiliations you will meet with in them? You might have to encounter in them many disgusts and bitternesses; and if at present you feel that you have strength to suffer mortification and humiliation, how do you know whether you will have that strength always?

The surest way is to regard as a temptation the desire of offices of whatever kind, lowly or honourable, but to hold oneself in readiness to receive all those that obedience shall impose on us; and whether they are honourable or abject, I would receive them humbly without saying a single word about them, at least unless I were asked; for in that case I should simply tell the truth as it appeared to me.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### PRACTICE OF THIS MAXIM IN SUFFERINGS.

Our Lord being on the cross, made us clearly see how we ought to mortify our natural feelings, which render us too tender over ourselves; for being in great thirst, He did not ask to drink, but only manifested His need by saying, "I thirst." After which, He made an act of very great submission; for some one having presented to Him, at the end of a reed, a sponge dipped in vinegar, He sucked it with His blessed lips.

Strange: He was not ignorant that it was a draught which would augment His pain; nevertheless He took it in all simplicity, to teach us with what submission we ought to receive what is presented to us when we are sick, without allowing our repugnance, disgust, and weariness to be seen.

Alas, if we are ever so little incommoded, far from imitating our Divine Master, we cease not to lament and bewail ourselves; our calamity, what-

ever it is, is without parallel, and what others suffer is nothing in comparison with it; we are more annoyed and impatient than we can express, and we find nothing that can assuage our trouble with sufficient promptitude. Lastly, it is a great pity to see how little we are imitators of the patience of our Saviour, who, forgetting His woes, never called attention to them, but was content that His heavenly Father, by whose order He suffered, considered them, and bestowed the fruit of them on man, for whom He suffered.

Engrave, therefore, deeply in your memory those two dear words which I have already recommended to you so much. Desire nothing, refuse nothing. In these two words I say every thing. Look at the infant Jesus in the manger; He receives poverty, nakedness, the company of brute creatures, the rudeness of the season, the cold, and all that His Father permits to happen to Him. It is not written that He ever stretched forth His hands for His Mother's breast. He abandoned Himself entirely to her care and to her providing. Nor did He refuse any of the little consolations which she gave Him; and He received the services of St. Joseph, the adoration and the presents of the shepherds and of the kings, all with a holy equality. We ought to do the like, and, following the example of our Divine Saviour, to ask for nothing and to refuse nothing, but to suffer and to receive equally all that the providence of God allows to happen to us. God give us grace to do this.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### PRACTICE OF THIS MAXIM IN SICKNESS.

I find in the Gospel a perfect model of this virtue in the person of the mother-in-law of St. Peter. She being attacked by a sharp fever, remained tranquil,

peaceable, free from all disquiet herself, and causing none to those around her. She was content to suffer her affliction with patience and sweetness. O God! how happy she was, and how well she merited that they should take care of her, as the Apostles did, who provided for her healing without being solicited by her to do so, but by a movement of charity and of compassion!

That dear patient knew well that our Lord was at Capharnaum, and that He healed the sick; nevertheless she does not hasten to send Him word that she was suffering. But what is yet more admirable is, that she sees Him in her house, when He looks upon her, and she looks also on Him, and nevertheless she does not say to Him one single word of her sickness to excite Him to compassion, nor does she make it a duty to touch Him in order to be healed.

More than this, she does not appear to make account of her sickness; she does not make any pitiful tale of it, she does not complain, and does not ask others to complain for her sake, or even to procure that she may be healed. She is contented that God and her superiors should know it. She looks upon our Lord not only as the sovereign Physician, but also as her God, to whom she belongs as well in health as in sickness, being equally content in sickness as in health.

Oh, how many persons would have used subtlety in order to be healed by our Lord, and would have said that they asked for health that they might serve Him better, fearing that He should be in want of any thing! But this holy woman did in nowise think of all that, making her resignation seen, and asking nothing of our Lord but His most holy will.

I do not, however, mean to say that one may not ask it of our Lord, as of Him who can give it to us,

with this condition, if such is His will. It does not suffice to be sick because God wills it, but one must be so as He wills, when He wills, as long as He wills, and in the manner that He wills; making no choice or rejection of any affliction, be it what it may, however abject or humiliating: for the affliction without abjection very often puffs up the heart instead of humiliating it; but when one has affliction and confusion at the same time, what an occasion for exercising patience, humility, and sweetness of spirit and of heart!

Let us then, following the example of this holy woman, take great pains to keep our heart in sweetness, turning our sicknesses to profit, as she did; for she arose immediately and waited on our Lord, making use of her health only for the service of our Lord. And in this she did not act like those persons of the world who, having been sick for some days, need weeks and months to nurse themselves after recovery.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### OF GENEROSITY.

If humility makes us believe that we can do nothing, from a consideration of what we know of our feebleness and poverty; generosity, on the contrary, makes us say with St. Paul: I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me. Humility leads us to mistrust ourselves; and generosity leads us to trust ourselves with God. You see, therefore, that these two virtues are so linked together, that they never are or can be separated.

There are persons who give way to a false humility, which hinders them from regarding the good that God has really placed in them. They are greatly

to blame; for the goods that God has placed in us ought to be recognised, valued, and highly honoured.

That humility which does not produce generosity is undoubtedly false; for after humility has said, I can do nothing, I am nothing, it immediately gives place to generosity, which says, There is nothing which I cannot do, inasmuch as I put all my confidence in God, who can do every thing; and with this confidence, humility consequently undertakes every thing which it is ordered to do, how difficult soever: and if it applies itself to fulfil the commandment in simplicity of heart, God will rather work a miracle than fail of giving it His aid; because it is not from any confidence in its own strength that humility undertakes the work, but from the confidence which it has in God.

Humility, then, does not consist only in distrusting ourselves, but in trusting ourselves with God; and distrust of ourselves and of our own strength produces confidence in God, and from this confidence springs generosity.

The Blessed Virgin furnished us with a most remarkable example on this subject, when she uttered the words: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word.* In saying that she is the handmaid of the Lord, she makes the greatest possible act of humility, and thereby opposes herself to the praises given her by the angel. But observe that, directly she has discharged her duty to humility, she forthwith makes a most excellent act of generosity, by saying, *Be it done unto me according to Thy word.*

It is true, she would say, that I am in nowise capable of this grace, regard being had to what I am of myself; but so far as that which is good in me is of

God, and what you say to me is His most holy will, I think that it can be done and that it will be done.

Behold the example which we ought to follow when we are ordered to do any thing : we ought to undertake it generously, without reckoning on ourselves, but reckoning much on the grace of God, who wills that we should obey without making any resistance.

But I well understand the subtlety of false humility : it is, that we fear we shall not come forth with honour to ourselves. We value our reputation so highly, that in the exercise of our office we do not like to be reckoned as apprentices, but as masters, who never commit any blunders at all.

Besides what we have said of this generosity, we ought also to add, that the soul which possesses it receives alike drynesses as well as consolations ; interior weariness, sadness, heaviness of spirit, as well as the favours and prosperity of a spirit full of peace and tranquillity ; and this because it considers that He who gave it consolations is the same as He who sends it afflictions, and all by an effect of His love, in order thereby to attract it to a very great perfection, which is the abnegation of itself ; remaining most assured, that He who deprives it here below of consolations, will by no means deprive it of them eternally in heaven above.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### OF EVENNESS OF SPIRIT.

What I have remarked in doves is, that they mourn even as they rejoice, and that they sing always the same note, as well in their songs of joy as in those in which they lament and express their complaints and their sorrow : whether they be joyous or

sad, they never change their tune ; their cooing note is ever the same.

It is this holy evenness of spirit which we ought to try to have : I do not say evenness of humour or of inclination, but of spirit ; for we ought to make no account of the fretting of the inferior part of our soul, which is that which causes disquietude and caprice, the superior part not doing its duty by rendering itself supreme, and not keeping good watch to discern its enemies and take cognisance of the tumults and assaults raised against it by the inferior part, which spring from our senses and our inclinations and passions, to make war upon the reason, and to subject it to their laws. I say, moreover, that we ought always to keep ourselves firm and resolute in the superior part of our soul, to follow virtue, of which we make profession, and to keep ourselves in a continual evenness amidst events favourable or adverse, in desolation as in consolation.

Holy Job furnishes us with an example on this subject, for he never sang except in the same key ; when God multiplied to him his property, gave him children, and sent to him at his will every thing which he could desire in this life, what said he except, Blessed be the name of the Lord ? It was his canticle of love, which he sang on every occasion. For behold him reduced to the extremity of affliction : what does he do ? He sings his song of lamentation in the same notes which he chanted in his season of joy. “ If we have received good things,” said he, “ at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil ? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord.” No other canticle, be the time what it may, but this : “ Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Oh, how like was that holy soul to the dove, which

rejoices and laments always in the same note! Thus may we do; and on every occasion thus may we receive goods, evils, consolations, afflictions, from the hand of the Lord, ever singing that same sweetest canticle, "Blessed be the holy name of God," and always on the air of continual evenness.

Never let us act like those who weep when consolation fails them, and only sing when it has returned: in which they resemble apes and baboons, which are sad and furious when the weather is gloomy and rainy, and never cease leaping and sporting when the weather is fair and serene.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### OF MODESTY.

Modesty is a virtue which regulates our exterior demeanour; and it has two vices opposed to it, namely, dissoluteness or levity in the gestures and look, and affectation or an affected demeanour. This virtue is extremely to be recommended; first, because it very much reduces us under subjection, and in this consists its value; for all that brings one under subjection for the sake of God is of great merit, and wonderfully pleasing to God. Secondly, because it brings us into subjection not only for a time, but always and in every place, as well when we are alone as in company, and even in sleeping.

A great Saint recommended one day this modesty to one of his disciples, in writing to him that he should prepare himself for rest modestly in the presence of God, in the same manner that one might be imagined to do, if our Lord being yet on earth, had commanded him to sleep in His presence. And although, says he, you see Him not, nor hear His command, He nevertheless is as if you saw Him; because,

in truth, He is there present when you lie down to rest, and He guards you whilst you sleep.

O my God, how modestly should we lie down to rest if we saw Thee! Doubtless we should fold our hands across our breast with great devotion, not only because of the presence of the divine Majesty, but because of the angels too who are present, and whose eyes also demand of us great modesty.

This virtue is also much to be recommended for the edification of our neighbour, it having brought many to conversion. This happened to St. Francis, who passing through a city, shewed such modesty in his demeanour, that, without his speaking a single word, a great number of young persons followed him, attracted solely by his example of modesty, which was a silent but most efficacious preaching.

Modesty ought to be observed in various ways, according to the quality of the persons. For example, a nun ought to have a modesty different from that of women, whether married or single, who are in the world; for what is modesty in one person would be immodesty in another. A gracious manner is extremely well suited to an aged person, which would be affected in one younger, to whom is befitting a modesty of a more subdued and humble description. Sometimes even what is in character with a person in one position is not so with the same person in another position: of which rule the following is a remarkable example.

The great Arsenius, chosen by Pope Damasus to instruct and bring up Arcadius the son of the Emperor Theodosius, after having been honoured for several years at the court, and much favoured by the emperor as a man of the world, became disgusted with all the vanities of the court, although he lived in it in a manner no less Christian-like than honour-

able, and resolved to retire to the desert, to live there with the solitaries and as a solitary. One day, when all the fathers were assembled for a spiritual conference, one of them informed the superior that Arsenius was wont to sit in a careless attitude, crossing one leg over another.

“It is true,” said the superior; “I have also noticed it; but he is a man who lived for a long time in the world, and who contracted that demeanour in the court. What can we do?” He made excuses for him: for he was sorry to trouble him by reproving him for what was in fact no sin at all; nevertheless he wished that this should be corrected, for Arsenius had only this fault.

One of the solitaries, a friend of Arsenius, who was named Pastor, then said: “O my father, do not trouble yourself; there will be no great difficulty in letting him know of it, without paining him; and for this reason, at the conference to-morrow, I will, if you please, put myself in the same attitude, and you will rebuke me for it before all the fathers, and he will understand that he ought not to use that posture.”

The superior having rebuked Pastor, the good Arsenius immediately threw himself on the ground at his feet, humbly asking pardon, and saying that perhaps it had not been observed, but that he had been in the habit of committing the same fault, that it was the ordinary attitude at court, and that he asked to have a penance for it. None was given him; but no one afterwards saw him in that attitude, which was not an immodesty in him when he was at the court, although it was so when he was amongst the solitaries.

There are, therefore, things which are immodest in some persons, but not so in others; as there are

things which are immodest at some times and in some places, but which are not so at other times and in other places.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## OF TEMPTATIONS AGAINST PURITY.

As regards the temptations of this good soul, alas, let her humiliate herself greatly, but not be at all surprised: the lilies which grow among thorns are the whiter for them, and the roses near garlic are the more sweet and odoriferous. *What doth he know that hath not been tried?* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 9.) If the temptations referred to are those of the feelings, as it would appear, let her make some change in bodily exercise when distressed by them; or if this cannot conveniently be done, let her try a change in place and posture: such changes will turn aside the thoughts to something else.

If the temptation is in the imagination, let her sing, keep with the others, change spiritual exercise,—that is to say, pass from one kind to another; and changes of place will be an additional help: above all, let her not be startled at these temptations, but let her frequently renew her vows and humble herself before God. Let her promise her heart the victory, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

If any thing keeps her in a state of scruple, let her tell it boldly and courageously, without making any reflection, when she goes to confession. But I hope in God that with a noble spirit she will keep herself exempt from all that can give her scruple. I should be glad that she should wear the hair-shirt once a week, unless she knows that that would render her too inattentive to other more important exercises, as sometimes happens.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## OF THE MANNER OF MAKING THE VOW OF CHASTITY.

I think that the desire which you have of making the vow of chastity to God has not been thoroughly weighed in your mind, and that you have not for any length of time considered its importance; which is the reason why I wish you should do so. Now, to make it well, take for three days previous leisure to prepare your vow well by meditation, which you can draw from these considerations.

Consider how chastity is a virtue pleasing to God and to the angels, He having willed that it should be eternally observed in heaven. Will you not be happy in commencing in this world the life which you shall continue eternally in the next? Bless God therefore, who has given you this holy inspiration.

Consider how noble is this virtue, which keeps our souls white as lilies, pure as the sun; which renders our bodies consecrated, and gives us the means of being all entirely devoted to His divine Majesty, —heart, body, spirit, and feeling. Is it not a great consolation to be able to say to our Lord, *My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God* (Ps. lxxxiii. 3), for the love of whom I quit all love, and to please whom I renounce all other pleasures?

Consider that the Holy Virgin was the first to vow her virginity to God, and after her so many virgins. But with what ardour, what love, what affection were not these virginities vowed! O God! the tongue cannot utter it.

Humiliate yourself greatly before the heavenly troop of virgins; and by a humble prayer, supplicate them to receive you among them, not to pretend to

equal them in purity, but at least that you may be devoted to be their servant, imitating them as closely as you can.

Beseech them to offer with you your vow to Jesus Christ, the King of virgins, and to render your chastity pleasing to Him by the merit of theirs.

Above all, recommend your intention to our Lady, and then to your good angel, that he may be pleased henceforth to preserve with an especial care your heart and your body from all defilement.

Then, on the day that you shall have chosen, when the priest elevates the holy Host, offer with him to the eternal Father the precious Body of His dear Son, and with it your body, which you will make a vow to preserve in chastity all the days of your life, using these words, or similar ones :

“O eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I, N., Thy unworthy creature, being in Thy divine presence, and in that of all Thy celestial court, promise to Thy divine majesty, and make a vow to maintain and keep all the time of my life an entire chastity and continence, by the help of Thy holy grace. May it please Thee, O divine Majesty, to accept this irrevocable vow, which I this day make, as an holocaust of sweetness ; and since it hath pleased Thee to inspire me to make it, give me the strength to accomplish it to Thy glory, for ever and ever.”

Hereupon you will receive holy communion, and you may say to our Lord that indeed He is your spouse.

But this vow once made, you must not allow any one to propose to you any thing contrary to it ; but you must have a great respect for your body, as no longer your body, but as a consecrated body and a most holy relic : and as one does not dare to touch or profane a chalice after the bishop has consecrated

it, so the Holy Spirit having consecrated your heart and your body by this vow, you must regard it with a great reverence.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO DESIRE TEMPTATIONS, AND THAT WE OUGHT TO BE ON OUR GUARD AGAINST THOSE OF SELF-WILL.

I wish that in your fervours you would not form those desires of temptations, or of occasions of mortifications ; for since, by the grace of God, they do not fail you, there is no occasion to employ your mind in desiring them. Employ it rather in preparing itself and placing itself in the position to receive them, not when you will, but when God wills to permit them.

I know of no temptations more manifest or easier to recognise than such as these : to break the vows in order to fast ; to presume that one is well adapted for the solitary life, and not well adapted for the conventual ; to wish to live to oneself in order the better to live to God ; to wish to have the entire enjoyment of one's own will in order the better to do the will of God. What chimeras !

That an inclination, or rather a fantasy and an imagination, impatient, capricious, vexed, hard, sharp, bitter, heady, can be an inspiration—what a contradiction !

To cease to praise God, and to be silent, in disgust at the offices which Holy Church ordains, because one cannot praise Him in a corner according to one's intention—what extravagance !

But I hope that God will turn all this to His glory, since that poor daughter submits to whatever she is commanded. Command her frequently, and impose upon her mortifications opposed to her in-

clinations—she will obey; and although it may seem to be by constraint, it will nevertheless be profitable, and according to the grace of God.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## OF THE VIRTUE OF DIVESTMENT.

We ought not merely to wish for this divestment in general, but in particular; for nothing is so easy as to say, in the lump as it were, We must deny ourselves and resign our own will; but to come to the practice of this is where lies the difficulty.

It is therefore necessary to make considerations in detail, both on oneself, and on one's state of life, and all the things dependent on it; and then, in particular, renounce sometimes one of our self-wills, and then another, until we are entirely divested of them.

Now, this divestment is made by three degrees. The first is an affection for this divestment, which arises in us from the consideration of its beauty. The second is the resolution which follows the affection; for we easily determine ourselves to a good which we regard with affection. The third is the practice, which is the most difficult.

The goods of which we ought to divest ourselves are of three kinds: external goods, the goods of the body, and the goods of the soul. External goods are all those things which are outside of us, such as property, possessions, friends, and the like. To divest ourselves of them, we ought to give them up into the hands of the Lord, and then ask of Him the affections which He wishes us to have for them; for one ought not to remain without affections, or to have them all equal; for one ought to love each in his degree, and it is charity which marks that degree, and which assigns to each affection its rank. The second class

of goods are those of the body,—beauty, health, and advantages of that kind; and after having thus renounced them, one ought not to go to the mirror to see whether one is beautiful, and one ought to be as contented with sickness as with health, at least so far as regards the superior part of the soul, for nature always feels, and sometimes cries out, especially when one is not very perfect. We ought, then, to take remedies and nourishments as they come to hand—I mean always according to reason; for as to inclinations, I do not amuse myself with them. The goods of the heart are the consolations and the sweetnesses which are found in the spiritual life. These goods are very good, you will say; and wherefore divest oneself of them? We must do so nevertheless, and we must surrender them into the hands of the Lord, to dispose of them as He pleases; and we must serve Him without them as with them. I do not mean here to speak of grace or of the virtues, for of those we ought never to divest ourselves; we ought, on the contrary, to desire them, and to ask the Lord for them unceasingly.

There are still other goods which are neither interior nor exterior, neither goods of the body nor goods of the heart: such are those which depend on the opinion of others, and which are called honour, esteem, reputation. Now we ought to divest ourselves altogether of these, and to desire no other honour but that of seeking in every thing the glory of God, and to desire no other esteem or reputation but that of wishing to give good edification in all things. All these divestments ought to be made, not from a feeling of scorn, but from self-denial, for the sole and only love of God.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

ANSWER TO CERTAIN DIFFICULTIES REGARDING THE VIRTUE  
OF DIVESTMENT.

We must here remark, that the satisfaction which we feel at meeting persons whom we love, and the testimonies of affection which we give them, are by no means contrary to this virtue of divestment, provided they are not disorderly, and that, when absent, our heart does not run after them. For how could it be, that the objects being present, the faculties should not be moved? It is as if one should say to a person, on meeting a lion or a bear, Do not be at all afraid. The thing is not in our power. In the same way, on meeting a person whom we love, it cannot be that we should not be moved with joy and satisfaction; and therefore this is not at all contrary to the virtue.

I say more: if I have a desire to see some one for a profitable purpose, and which ought to turn out to the glory of God; if his intention of coming to see me is crossed by some obstacle, and if I feel some little annoyance on that account, and even take some trouble to remove the obstacle which prevents his coming, I do nothing contrary to the virtue of divestment, provided always that I do not lose tranquillity.

Thus you see that the virtue is not such a terrible affair as is imagined. It is a fault that many people have, to form to themselves chimeras in their mind, and to think that the road to heaven is strangely difficult; in which they deceive themselves, and are much in the wrong. This was what made David say, in speaking to God, that the law of the Lord, which the wicked proclaimed to be hard and difficult,

was *sweeter than honey and the honeycomb*. (Ps. xviii. 11.)

It is true that one can never arrive at perfection whilst one retains an affection to any imperfection, however small it be, were it only a useless thought; and it is not to be credited what mischief this causes to a soul. We must, then, cut the evil short the moment we perceive it, however small it be.

We must also examine in good faith whether it is true, as seems to us sometimes, that we have not our affection engaged. For example, if when any one praises you, you happen to say a word that augments the praise given you, or still more, when you look out for it by studied words, then search the bottom of your conscience, for on these occasions you will find in it affection to vanity.

You may also know whether you are attached to any thing, when you cannot conveniently do what you had intended to do; for if you have not affection for it, you will remain as much in repose at not being able to do it as if you had done it; and, on the contrary, if you trouble yourself about it, it is a mark that you have placed your affection on it.

Now, our affections are so precious (since they ought all to be employed in loving God), that we ought to take good heed not to place them except exactly right; for a single fault, however trifling, done with an affection for it, is more contrary to perfection than any other done by mistake and without affection.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### HOW ONE OUGHT TO HATE ONE'S DEFECTS, AND LOOK ON DEATH.

It is very true, there cannot be this drowsiness and numbness of the feelings without some sort of

sensible distress ; but whilst your will and the depth of your soul is fully resolved to be all for God, there is nothing to fear ; for these are natural imperfections, and rather ailments than sins or spiritual defects. You ought nevertheless to excite and rouse yourself to courage and animation as much as possible.

Oh, say you, this death is hideous. It is very true ; but the life which is beyond, and which the mercy of God will give to us, is also mightily desirable ; and so we must in nowise lose confidence. For although we are miserable, we are not by any means so miserable as God is merciful to those who have the will to love Him, and who have placed their hope in Him.

When the blessed Cardinal Borromeo was on the point of death, he caused his attendants to bring him the image of our dead Lord, to soften his own death by that of his Saviour. It is the best of all remedies against the dread of your departure, to meditate on that of Him who is our life, and never to think of the one without adding the thought of the other.

Do not examine whether what you do is little or much, good or evil, provided that it be not sin, and that in good faith you have the will to do it for God. As much as you can, do perfectly that which you do ; but when it is done, do not think any more about it ; think of what is to be done next. Walk very simply with the Cross of our Lord, and do not torment your mind. We ought to hate our defects ; but with a tranquil and peaceful hatred, not with a troubled and distempered hatred : and farther, we ought to have patience when we see them, and derive from them the profit of a holy abasement of ourselves. For want of this, your imperfections which you discern with subtlety, trouble you with yet greater subtlety,

and by this means maintain themselves, there being nothing which more preserves our faults than a disquietude and troubled eagerness to get rid of them.

It is a severe temptation to become saddened with the world, when we must necessarily be in it. The providence of God is wiser than we are. We fancy that by changing our ship we shall fare better : yes, if we changed ourselves. My God, I am the sworn enemy of these useless, dangerous, and bad desires ; for although what we desire is good, the desire is nevertheless bad ; since God does not will for us this sort of good, but another, in which He wills that we should exercise ourselves. God wills to speak to us amidst the thorns and the bush (Exod. iii. 2), and we will Him to speak to us in *the whistling of a gentle air*. (3 Kings xix. 12.) His goodness defend you ! but be constant and courageous, and rejoice in that He gives you the will to be all His.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

We ought to join these two things together : an extreme attention to practising our exercises, both meditation and the virtues, with great exactness ; and in nowise to doubt or disquiet ourselves, or be astonished, if we happen to fail in them sometimes : for the first point depends on our fidelity, which ought always to be entire, and to increase from hour to hour ; the second arises from our weakness, which we can never lay aside during this mortal life.

When we happen to commit any defect, let us immediately examine our heart, and let us ask it whether it has not always the lively and entire resolution of serving God : and I hope that it will

reply to us, Yes; and that it would rather suffer a thousand deaths than part with that resolution. Let us, then, ask it: Wherefore, then, didst thou just now stumble? Wherefore art thou so cowardly? It will reply to you, I was surprised, I know not how; but I am so heavy just now. Alas, we must pardon it; for it is not by unfaithfulness that it failed, but by infirmity.

We must, therefore, correct it sweetly and tranquilly, and not irritate it and trouble it yet more. What! (we should say to it) my heart, my friend, in the name of God take courage; let us go forward, let us take care of ourselves, let us raise ourselves to our succour and to God. Alas, we must be charitable towards our soul, and not devour it, when we see that it does not err with its full consent.

You perceive that in this exercise we practise holy humility: that which we do for our salvation is done for the service of God; for our Lord did nothing in this world except for our salvation. By no means desire war, but wait for it in a steady attitude. Our Lord be your strength.

It is not possible that you can be so speedily mistress of your soul, and keep it so absolutely under your hand at the first time. Be content with gaining from time to time some little advantage over your ruling passion. One must bear with the others; but in the first place one must bear with one's self, and have patience with one's being imperfect.

Above all, do not lose courage; have patience, wait, exercise yourself strongly in the spirit of compassion, I do not doubt but that God will hold you with His hand; and if He allows you to stumble, that will only be to make you know that if He did not hold you, you would fall altogether, and to make you hold the faster by His hand.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## OF THE FEAR OF DEATH.

Although there is no sin in this fear and in this dread of death, nevertheless it is injurious to the heart, which being troubled by this passion, cannot so well unite itself to its God by love. I assure you, therefore, that if you persevere in the exercises of devotion, as I see that you do, you will find yourself gradually consoled; because your soul, finding itself thus freed from its evil affections, and uniting itself more and more to God, will become less attached to this mortal life, and to the vain gratifications which it might have in it.

Exercise yourself often with thoughts of the great sweetness and mercy with which our Saviour receives souls on their departure, when they have placed their confidence in Him during their life, and have endeavoured to serve and love Him, each in its vocation. *How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a light heart!* (Ps. lxxii. 1.)

Often raise your heart, by a holy confidence mingled with a profound humility, towards our Redeemer, saying to Him: I am miserable, Lord, and Thou wilt receive my misery in the bosom of Thy mercy, and Thou wilt draw me by Thy fatherly hand, to make me enter into the enjoyment of Thy inheritance; I am poor and abject, but Thou wilt love me in that day because I have hoped in Thee, and have desired to be Thine.

Excite in yourself, as much as you are able, the love of Paradise and of the heavenly life, and make many meditations on this subject; for in proportion as you shall value and love eternal happiness, you

will have less apprehension about quitting this mortal and perishable life.

Often make acts of love towards our Lady and the holy Angels. Familiarise yourself with them frequently, addressing them with words of praise; for if you have frequent access to these citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, it will trouble you the less to quit the earthly Jerusalem.

Often adore, praise, and bless the most holy death of our crucified Lord, and place all your confidence in His merits, by which your death will be rendered happy. Often say: O divine death of my sweet Jesus, thou wilt bless mine, and it shall be blessed; I bless Thee, and Thou shalt bless me, O my Jesus, more dear to me than life. Thus St. Charles, in the sickness of which he died, caused the attendants to place in his sight a picture of our Lord in the sepulchre, and another of our Lord praying on the Mount of Olives, to console himself at that moment by the death and passion of his Redeemer.

Sometimes reflect on what you are, a child of the Catholic Church, and rejoice thereupon, for the children of that Mother, who desire to live according to her laws, remain always happy; and, as St. Teresa says, it is a great consolation at the hour of death to be a child of our holy Mother the Church.

End all your prayers by an act of confidence, saying: *Thou, O Lord, art my hope; I have made the Most High my refuge.* (Ps. xc. 9.) O my God, *who hath hoped in Thee and been confounded?* (Ecclus. ii. 11.) *In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped; let me never be put to confusion.* (Ps. lxx. 1.)

In your ejaculatory prayers during the day, and in receiving the most holy Sacrament, always use words of love and of hope towards our Lord, such as these: Thou art my Father, O Lord, O God; Thou

art the spouse of my soul, Thou art the king of my love, and the well-beloved of my heart. O sweet Jesus, Thou art my dear Master, my succour, and my refuge in the day of tribulation.

Often think of the persons whom you love most, and from whom it would distress you most to be separated, as of persons with whom you will live eternally in heaven : for example, your husband and your children, who will one day, by the help of God, be blessed in that eternal life in which they will enjoy your happiness and rejoice at it ; and you too will enjoy theirs and will rejoice at it, without ever being separated again : which end you will find it the easier to attain, inasmuch as all those who are most dear to you serve God and fear Him.

## CHAPTER XL.

### OF PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

It is impossible for us, living in the world, although we only touch it with our feet, to avoid being soiled with its dust. The old patriarchs, Abraham and the others, usually offered their guests water to wash their feet ; I think that the first thing which we ought to do is to wash the affections of our soul, to receive the hospitality of our good God in His Paradise.

It appears to me, that it is always a great reproach to mortals to die without having thought about it beforehand ; but it is doubly such to those whom our Lord has favoured with the advantage of old age. Those who arm themselves before the trumpet sounds, are always in better order than those who run to take up their arms at the moment of surprise.

We ought quite at our ease to bid farewell to the

world, and little by little draw off our affections from creatures. The trees which the wind throws down are not fit to be transplanted, because they leave their roots in the earth; but whoever wishes to remove them to another spot, must adroitly disengage the roots, little by little, one after the other. And since from this miserable earth we are to be transplanted into the land of the living, we ought to draw off and disengage from the world our affections one after the other. I do not say that we ought rudely to break all the ties we may have formed in it (efforts should be made for this when there is a proper occasion), but we ought to unweave and unravel them.

They who set forth on a journey without warning are excusable for not having taken leave of friends, and for starting with a bad equipage; but not so those who know tolerably well the time of their departure; they ought to hold themselves ready, not to set out before the time, but to wait for it with more tranquillity.

For this purpose, I think that you will find unspeakable consolation in choosing an hour in each day to think before God and your good Angel on what is required for you to make a happy retreat. In what order are your affairs, if it were necessary that this should take place soon?

St. Bernard says, that the soul which wishes to go to God ought first to kiss the foot of the crucifix, purge its affections, and make a good resolution to separate itself little by little from the world and its vanities; then to kiss the hands of our crucified Lord, by the change in its actions which follows on the change of affections; and lastly, to kiss His mouth, uniting itself by an ardent love to that supreme goodness.

We owe ourselves to God, to our country, to our

relations, to our friends. To God in the first place, then to our country; but first to our heavenly, and in the second place to our earthly country: after that to our relations; *but no one is so nearly related to you as yourself*: lastly to our friends; but are you not yourself the first of your friends? Enough of this for the present year, which is flying away and gliding from before us, and which in the next two months will make us see the vanity of its duration, as all the preceding years have done, which are no more.

## CHAPTER XLI.

THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO DESIRE TO KNOW THE STATE OF  
THE DEAD.

I will tell you that by your letter I know very distinctly the qualities of your heart, and amongst them all, its ardour in loving and cherishing what it loves. This is what makes you speak so much to our Lord of this dear departed one, and which leads you to desire to know where he is. Now you ought to repress these too violent desires, which proceed from the excess of this passion; and when you notice your mind running on these thoughts, you ought all at once, and even with uttered words, to return to the side of our Lord, and say to Him this, or something like this: O Lord, how sweet is Thy providence, and how good is Thy mercy! How happy is this child to have fallen into Thy fatherly arms, in which he cannot but be well, wherever he may be!

Yes, for you ought carefully to avoid thinking of him as in any place but paradise or purgatory, since, thanks be to God! there is no reason to think otherwise. Recall, therefore, your mind in this way, and then employ it in acts of love towards our crucified Lord.

When you recommend this child to the divine Majesty, say to Him simply : Lord, I recommend to Thee the child of my womb, but much more the child of the womb of Thy mercy, born indeed of my blood, but regenerate in Thine.

After this, turn to something else ; for if you allow your mind to amuse itself with this object suited and pleasing to your feelings, and to that deep-seated and natural affection, it will never be likely to quit you ; and on pretence of pious prayers, it will extend itself to merely natural enjoyments and satisfaction, such as will deprive you of the leisure to employ yourself about the supernatural and sovereign object of your love.

It is, no doubt, necessary to moderate ourselves in these ardours of natural affection, which only seem to trouble our mind and to distract our heart. Let us, then, settle our spirit well in our heart, and let us command it to do the duty imposed on it, which is to love God very singly ; and let us not allow it any frivolous amusement, either about what passes in this world, or about what passes in the other. But having assigned to creatures all we owe to them of love and of charity, let us refer all to that first love which we owe to the Creator, and let us conform ourselves to His divine will.

## CHAPTER XLII.

THAT WE OUGHT TO BE CONTENT WITH OUR STATE OF LIFE.

I say to you, and say it decidedly, that you should adhere faithfully to the will of God and His providence on the subject of your old temptation ; acquiescing with all humility and sincerity in the good pleasure of Heaven, by which you find yourself in

the state of life in which you are. We ought to remain on board the ship in which we are, in order to cross from this life to the other; and we ought to remain there willingly and with affection, because, although sometimes we have not been placed there by the hand of God, but by the hand of man, still, once being there, God wills us to be there, and consequently we ought to be there sweetly and willingly.

Oh, how many ecclesiastics have embarked in that state of life on wrong considerations, and by the compulsion which their parents exercised to make them enter into that vocation, who make a virtue of necessity, and remain from love where they entered by compulsion! Otherwise, what would become of them? Where there is less of your own choice, there is more of submission to the will of Heaven. Acquiescing, then, in the Divine will, often say with your whole heart: Yes, eternal Father, I will to be thus, because thus it is Thy pleasure I should be. And thereupon I entreat of you to be very faithful to the practice of this acquiescence and dependence on the state of life in which you are placed.

And for this purpose, you ought sometimes to take an opportunity of naming the persons you know of, to whose very name you feel an aversion; and when you speak to the principal of those persons, you ought sometimes to use words of respect among your remonstrances. This point is of such importance for the perfection of your soul, that I would willingly write it with my blood.

In what would we shew our love towards Him who suffered so much for us, if not amidst aversions, repugnances, and contradictions? We ought to plunge our head among the thorns of these difficulties, and allow our heart to be transfixed by the spear of contradiction, drink the vinegar and gall,

yea eat wormwood and aloes, since it is God who wills it.

Lastly, since you formerly fed this temptation, and favoured it with all your heart, you ought now with all your heart to feed and fortify this acquiescence. But if you meet with any difficulty on this subject through the fault of that person, make no move without having first looked to eternity, placed yourself in a position of indifference, and taken the advice of some worthy servant of God; for the enemy seeing you victorious over this temptation by your acquiescence in the good pleasure of God, will set at work, I imagine, every kind of invention to trouble you.

### CHAPTER XLIII.

#### OF THOSE WHO ENTER INTO RELIGION AS IF BY COMPULSION.

As for the vocation of this young person, I hold it to be a good one, although it is mixed with various imperfections on the part of her mind, and although it were desirable that she had come to God simply and purely for the blessing of being wholly devoted to His service. But God does not draw by equal motives all whom He calls to Himself; on the contrary, but few are to be found who come to His service entirely for the sake of being His and serving Him.

Among the daughters whose conversion is famous in the Gospel, it was only Magdalene who came through love and with love. The adulteress came through public humiliation, as the Samaritan woman through a particular humiliation. The woman of Canaan came in order to be consoled in her temporal affliction. St. Paul, the first hermit, at the age of fifteen years retired into his cave to avoid persecution. St. Ignatius and many others came by means of tribulation.

We ought not to expect all to begin by perfection. It is of little consequence how one begins, provided that one is very firmly resolved to go on well and to end well.

Those who were compelled to enter in at the marriage-feast in the Gospel did not eat and drink the less on that account. We ought principally to regard the dispositions of those who come to religion for continuance and perseverance; for there are souls who would never enter in if the world smiled upon them, and whom we nevertheless see well inclined to despise the vanity of the world.

If this daughter has a good heart, I feel assured that she will soon find herself altogether transformed, and that she will marvel at the sweetness wherewith our Lord attracts her unto His couch, amidst so many flowers and fruits of all heavenly odour. As to what the world will say of this vocation, no attention should be paid to that; for neither is it for the world that she is accepted.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### OF AUSTERITIES PRACTISED THROUGH SELF-LOVE AGAINST OBEDIENCE.

She is quite right, certainly, this good daughter, in thinking that her humour for fasting is a real temptation. That, indeed, it has been, it is, and it will be, so long as she continues to use these abstinences, by which it is true that she weakens her body and her evil inclinations, but, by a poor exchange, fortifies her self-love with her own will; she reduces her body, but she overcharges her heart with the poisonous excess of her own esteem and her own desires.

Abstinence done contrary to obedience removes sin from the body to infuse it into the heart. Let

her direct her attention to diminishing her own self-will, and she will soon abandon these fantastic shadows of sanctity in which she rests so superstitiously.

She has consecrated her bodily strength to God ; it is no longer hers to destroy it, unless when it is God's will she shall do so : she will never learn the will of God except by obedience to the creatures whom God has given to her to be her guides.

She must be aided against this temptation by the advice of some true servants of God ; for more than one person is required to root out these persuasions of exterior sanctity, so dearly purchased by the prudence of self-love.

As for all your other exercises, you will continue them in the way in which I marked them out. As for your time of going to rest, I will not, if you please, alter my opinion ; but if your bed displeases you, and if you cannot remain in it so long a time as the others, I will readily permit you to rise an hour earlier in the morning, for it is not to be imagined how dangerous are long watchings at night, and how they weaken the brain. People do not feel it in youth, but they feel it all the more afterwards ; and many have made themselves useless in this way.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### OF FIDELITY TO THE RULES.

We know not how to love the rules, if we love not Him who made them. In proportion as we love and value him who makes the law, we render ourselves exact in observing it. Some are attached to the law by chains of iron, and these are they who observe it from the fear they have of being damned ; and others are attached to it by chains of gold, and these are they who observe it from love. David tells

us that God has *commanded that His commandments be kept most diligently.* (Ps. cxviii. 4.) You see that He wishes us to be punctual; and this is what all are who observe the commandments from love. They do not merely avoid any turning aside from the law, they avoid even the shadow of it. For this reason the spouse is compared to “the doves upon brooks of waters,” which sit beside the softly-flowing rivers, the waters whereof are crystalline.

You know well that the dove sits in security beside those waters, because she can see in them the shadow of the birds of prey which she fears; and the moment she sees them she flies away, and cannot be taken off her guard: such, our Lord would say, is my beloved; for so long as she flies from the shadow of turning aside from my commandments, she has no fear of falling into the hands of disobedience. Certainly, whoever deprives himself voluntarily by the vow of obedience of doing his own way in things indifferent, sufficiently shews that he loves to be subject in things which are necessary and of obligation.

We ought, then, to be extremely punctual in the observance of the laws and rules which are given us by our Lord, but above all, in that point of following the community in all things. If you are strong, I conjure you to weaken yourself in order to be conformable to the weak; and if you are feeble, I tell you, strengthen yourself to adjust yourself to the strong.

The Apostle St. Paul says, that he *became all things to all men, that he might save all.* Who is weak, he says, *and I am not weak?* (1 Cor. ix. 22; and 2 Cor. xi. 29.) Who is sick, with whom I am not sick? With the strong I am strong. You see how infirm the Apostle is when he is with the in-

firm, and how willingly he takes the indulgences necessary for their infirmities, to give them confidence in doing the same ; but when he finds himself with the strong, he is like a giant in giving them courage : and if he can perceive that any one is scandalised with what he does, although it be permitted, nevertheless he has such a zeal for the peace and tranquillity of his heart that he willingly abstains from doing it.

But, you will tell me, now that it is the hour of recreation I have a very great desire to go and meditate, in order to unite myself more intimately with the divine goodness. May I not reasonably think that the law which orders me to use the recreation does not bind me, since my mind is of itself sufficiently disposed to gaiety ? Oh, no ; you have neither a right to think so nor to say so. If you have no need of recreation for yourself, you ought nevertheless to use it for the sake of those who have need of it.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### OF THE VIOLATION OF THE RULES.

Although some of the rules do not of themselves oblige under any sin, either mortal or venial, nevertheless whoever voluntarily breaks them from contempt, or to the scandal of others, commits without doubt a great offence, because he lowers and dishonours the things of God, gives the lie to his professions, fails of bringing forth fruits of good example : all which exposes him to some chastisement of Heaven, or at least to the deprivation of the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are ordinarily withdrawn from those who abandon their good intentions, and leave the good way in which God had placed them.

Now, he violates them from contempt who neglects them not only voluntarily, but of set purpose; from whence it follows, that he who so violates them not only disobeys, but wills to disobey. For example: it is forbidden to eat except at meals. If, then, any one happens to eat at other times, attracted by the pleasure of eating, then he disobeys, not from disobedience, but from sensuality; on the contrary, if he eats because he does not value the rule, and does not choose to make account of it, then he disobeys from contempt; and this disobedience is never without some sin, at least venial, even in things which are only counselled. For although one is at liberty not to follow the counsels of holy things, one cannot, nevertheless, leave them from contempt without committing sin, because if we are not obliged to do every thing that is good, we are nevertheless obliged to honour it, and, *à fortiori*, not to despise it.

He, moreover, who violates the rules from contempt considers them vile and useless, which is a great presumption; or if he considers them all useful, and yet does not choose to submit to them, he then breaks his intention, in which his neighbour has a great interest, to whom he gives scandal and bad example.

But that you may the better discern when a person violates the rules from contempt and scandal, the following are some marks of it:

1. When being corrected, he makes light of it, and has no repentance.
2. When he perseveres, without shewing any desire or intention of amendment.
3. When he maintains that the rule or the commandment does not apply.
4. When he tries to draw others into the same

violation, and to take from them the fear of that violation, saying to them that it is nothing, and that there is no danger.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

It is, further, necessary to put you on your guard against a temptation which may happen in this matter: it is, that persons sometimes do not consider themselves disobedient, when they only despise one or two rules, which appear to them of little importance, provided they observe all the others.

But, my God, who does not see through this deceit? For what one person thinks of little value, another will esteem very highly; and *vice versa*. In the same way, if one religious were to disregard one rule, and a second another, and a third another, soon every thing would be in disorder; for when the mind of man is only guided by its inclinations and aversions, what happens to it but a perpetual inconstancy and variety of faults? Yesterday I was in high spirits—silence was disagreeable to me; to-day, if I am melancholy, recreation will be a burden to me: yesterday, when I was in consolation, the singing gave me pleasure; to-day, when I am in dryness, it will be displeasing to me: and so of the rest.

Hence, whoever wishes to live happily and perfectly must accustom himself to live according to reason, the rules, and obedience, and not according to his inclinations and aversions; and he must value all the rules, honour them, cherish them, at least by his superior will. For if he despises one of them now, to-morrow he will despise another of them, and the day after yet another; and when once the tie of

duty is broken, every thing which was bound by it, little by little, is destroyed and scattered.

God forbid that any one should ever stray so far from the path of God's love as to go and lose himself in contempt of the rules, by disobedience, hardness and obstinacy of heart !

When you feel disgust or aversion for the rules, you ought to act as in other temptations, correcting the disgust and aversion by reason, and by a strong resolution of the superior part of the soul ; waiting until God sends consolation, and makes the soul, cast down by disgust, perceive, like the wearied and fatigued Jacob, that the rules are the true ladder by which, in imitation of the angels, we ascend to God by charity, and descend by humility.

If it is through infirmity that a person breaks the rule, then he ought, at the instant, to humble himself before our Lord, and ask His pardon, renewing his resolutions ; and he ought, above all, to take care not to fall into discouragement and inquietude, but with new confidence in God to return to His holy love.

If it is through negligence and carelessness, he may and ought to mention it in confession, as a thing in which there may be sin.

If it is through forgetfulness, and the matter is not of great importance, there is no sin at all in it, either great or small : I say, if the matter is not of great importance ; for then one ought to keep one's attention awake so as not to fall into forgetfulness, just as if the question was about attending to a sick man in danger of death.

We ought to believe that in proportion as the divine love makes progress in our souls, it will render us continually more exact and careful in the observance of the rules ; for if they obliged us under penalty of death, how straitly would we observe them ! But

love is as strong as death ; therefore the attractions of love are as powerful to make us execute a resolution as are the menaces of death.

*Jealousy*, says the holy canticle, *is as hard as hell* (Cant. viii. 6) : the souls, then, that have this jealousy will do as much, or more, in virtue of this jealousy, than they would from the fear of hell ; so that those who are conducted by the sweet violence of love will observe their rule, God assisting them, as exactly as if they were obliged to it under pain of eternal damnation.

Lastly, we ought always to remember these words : that *he that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul ; but he that neglecteth his own way shall die.* (Prov. xix. 16.) Now the way of each one is that state of life in which God has placed him.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO GO BEYOND THE RULES.

You ask me whether a sister who is of a strong constitution may not use more austerities than the others, with the permission of the superioress, but in such a way as that the others do not perceive it ?

I reply to this, that there is no secret that is not conveyed secretly to another ; and thus from one to another people end by forming religions in religions, and little cliques, and then all goes to ruin.

St. Teresa describes admirably well the evil caused by these little undertakings, which arise from the wish of doing more than the law ordains and the others do, especially if it is the superioress ; for the moment that her daughters perceive it, they will be anxious to do the same ; and they will not fail of finding out reasons to persuade themselves that they shall do it well, some urged on by zeal, and others to please

her ; and all this will prove a temptation to those who will not or cannot do the same.

One ought never to introduce, permit, or suffer these particularities, except in certain cases of special necessity ; for example, if it happened that a sister was oppressed by some great temptation.

But if any sister were so generous and so courageous as to wish to arrive at perfection in a quarter of an hour, by doing more than the others, I would counsel her to humble herself, and to be content not to arrive at perfection under three days' time, and to travel in company with the others.

If there are also sisters of stronger constitutions, all very well ; but they must not for all that travel faster than those who are weak, according to the example of Jacob, who, returning from Mesopotamia, accommodated himself to the pace, not only of his little children, but even of his lambs. And by so doing, I assure you that you will not arrive a whit the more slowly at perfection ; on the contrary, you will arrive there sooner, because, not having much to do, you will apply yourselves to do it with the utmost perfection possible for you.

I cannot express to you sufficiently of what importance it is to be punctual to the least little rule, as also not to desire to undertake any thing beyond it, under any pretext whatever, because it is the means of preserving the religion in its totality, and in its first fervour ; and the contrary is what destroys it, and makes it fall from its original perfection.

As for communions, it is no doubt more perfect to conform oneself to the community, unless it be in certain cases, such as the feast of our patron saint, or of any saint to whom we have had a devotion all our life, or in any very pressing necessity. But as for those little favours which we have sometimes, and

which, generally speaking, are merely natural effects, which make us wish for communion, we ought to pay no attention to that, but conform to the community; otherwise, when we ought to communicate, self-love will suggest to us to abstain for the sake of humility; and when it is not the time for it, self-love will lead us to ask for communion; and thus there would be no end of it.

We ought not to reckon as inspiration things which are not in the rule, unless it be in cases so extraordinary, that perseverance makes us know that it is the will of God. I consider that it is a very great act of perfection to conform oneself in every thing to the community, and never, of our own choice, to depart from it. For what reason, think you, did our Lord and His most holy Mother submit themselves to the law of presentation and purification, unless because of the love they bore to the community? They were not at all obliged to it, but they desired to conform themselves to that which all the others observed, and not to be singular in any thing.

But, you will say again, it is for the sake of mortification that you remain a little longer in choir than the others on festival-days, because the time has already seemed very long to you for the two or three hours together you have been there.

To this I reply, that it is not a general rule that one ought to do every thing to which one has a repugnance, any more than to abstain from things to which one has an inclination. For if a sister has an inclination to say the divine office, she ought not to give up assisting at it, under the pretext of wishing to mortify herself.

To conclude: the time on festivals which is left at liberty for you to use as you please, may be employed by each sister according to her devotion; but it is

nevertheless true, that having remained three hours, and perhaps more, in choir with the community, there is much reason to fear that the quarter of an hour longer which you would spend there would be a little morsel that you would give to your self-love.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### OF PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY IN THE MIDST OF AFFAIRS.

I remember that you said to me how burdensome you felt the multiplicity of your affairs; and I said to you that it was an excellent means for the acquisition of true and solid virtues. It is a continual martyrdom, that of the multiplicity of affairs. For as the flies weary and annoy those who travel in summer more than the fatigue of the journey itself, so the diversity and multiplicity of affairs give more trouble than the weight of the affairs themselves.

You have need of patience; and I hope that God will give it to you, if you diligently ask it of Him, and force yourself to practise it faithfully, by preparing yourself for it every morning, by a special application of some point in your meditation, and resolving to settle yourself in patience throughout the course of the day, or as often as you feel yourself distracted with business.

Lose no occasion, however trifling, of exercising sweetness of heart towards any one. Do not reckon on being able to succeed in your affairs by your industry, but only by the assistance of God; and consequently repose yourself in His bosom, thinking that He will do what is best for you, provided that you use a sweet diligence on your part.

I say a sweet diligence, because there is a kind of violent diligence, which perils the heart and the business you transact. Such diligence does not deserve

the name, but should rather be called anxiety and trouble. My God! we shall soon be in eternity, and then we shall see what a little matter are all the affairs of the world, and of how small consequence it was whether they were done or not done. Nevertheless, we now make ourselves anxious as though they were great things.

When we were little children, with what earnestness did we gather bits of tiles, wood, and clay, to build little houses with, and when any one destroyed them, we were greatly distressed at it, and wept, but now we know right well that all that was of little consequence.

We shall do the same in heaven one day, when we shall see that our interests in the world were all mere childishness.

I do not wish to take away the attention which we are bound to give to these little deceptions and trifles, for God has committed them to us in this world as exercises; but I would be glad to abate the ardour and vehemence of the pursuit. Let us pursue our childish occupations, since we are children, but let us not catch cold about them; and if any one throws down our little houses and designs, let us not be over-distressed; for when night comes, I mean death, and we must return to our homes, our little houses will all be useless. We must return to our Father's house.

Attend diligently to your affairs; but know that you have no affairs of greater importance than those of your salvation, and the paving of the way to a true and solid devotion. Have patience with all, but principally with yourself; I mean, do not make yourself unhappy about your imperfections, but always have courage to rise above them. I am very glad that you make a fresh beginning every day; there is no better

means for achieving the spiritual life than always to recommence, and never to suppose that you have done enough.

## CHAPTER L.

### OF PEACE IN THE MIDST OF CONTRADICTIONS.

As for me, I have entrusted all these adverse winds to the providence of God. Let them blow hard or soft as they please, the tempest or the calm are to me indifferent. *Blessed are ye when they shall speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake.* (St. Matt. v. 11.) If the world could find nothing to say against us, we should not be truly the servants of God.

The other day, naming St. Joseph at Mass, I recalled to my mind that sovereign moderation which he shewed when he saw his incomparable spouse was found with child, whom he believed to be a most pure virgin; and I recommended to his prayers the mind and the tongue of those worthy gentlemen, that he might obtain for them a little of that sweetness and benignity; and presently afterwards it occurred to my spirit that our Lady in this perplexity did not say a word, did not excuse herself, did not distress herself, and the providence of God delivered her; and I recommended this affair to her, and resolved to leave it in her hands, and to keep myself tranquil. What, indeed, does one gain by opposing the winds and the waves, except worthless foam?

Oh, I must not be so tender over myself! I must be very willing to hear that people censure me. If I do not deserve it in one way, I deserve it in another. The Mother of Him who merited eternal adoration never said one single word when she was charged with disgrace and ignominy. To sweet and

patient hearts heaven and earth belong. You are too sensitive about me. Must I be the only person in the world exempt from attacks? I assure you that nothing has affected me so much on the present occasion as to see that you are affected. *Have peace, and the God of peace shall be with you* (2 Cor. xiii. 11); and He will *trample under foot the lion and the dragon* (Ps. xc. 13); and nothing will trouble our peace if we are His servants.

There is much self-love in wishing that all the world should love us, and that every thing should turn out to our glory.

Do not glory in the affection of fathers who are in the world and of the world, but in that of the heavenly Father, who hath loved you, and *hath given His Son for you.* (St. John iii. 16.)

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## PART FOURTH.

OF DEVOTION, AND OF THE PRINCIPAL EXERCISES  
OF PIETY.

## CHAPTER I.

## OF DEVOTION.

You ask me what means you ought to use for acquiring devotion. This is no trifling question ; but take good heed to what I shall say to you in reply.

The virtue of devotion is nothing else than a general inclination and promptitude of spirit in doing that which one knows is agreeable to God. It is that enlargement of the heart of which David said, *I have run the way of Thy commandments when Thou didst enlarge my heart.* (Ps. cxviii. 32.) Those who are simply good people walk in the way of God, but the devout run in it ; and when they are greatly devout, they fly in it.

Now I shall tell you that there are some rules that one must observe in order to be truly devout. We must, above all things, observe the commandments of God and of the Church, which are laid down for every faithful Christian ; and without that, one cannot have any true devotion in it. This every one knows. Besides the general commandments, we must carefully observe the particular commandments, which regard each person's vocation ; and whoever does not do this, he will not fail, at the resurrection, of being culpable of sin, and of being damned, if he has died in it.

For example, Bishops are commanded to visit

their dioceses, teach their flocks, defend and console them. If a Bishop spent all the week in prayer, and fasted all his life, but did not do this, he is lost. Though a woman, being in the married state, were to work miracles, and yet not obey her husband in what regards the duties of that state, or to take no trouble to bring up her children well, she is *worse than an infidel*, says St. Paul (1 Tim. v. 8); and so of other cases. Here, then, are two sorts of commandments which it is necessary to observe diligently, as the foundation of all devotion; and nevertheless, the virtue of devotion does not consist in observing them, but in observing them with promptitude, and willingly.

## CHAPTER II.

### MEANS FOR ARRIVING AT DEVOTION.

To acquire this promptitude, in which the virtue of devotion consists, we must avail ourselves of several considerations.

The first is, that God so wills it; and there is indeed good reason that we should do His will, for we are in the world only for that purpose. Alas, we every day ask of Him that His will be done; and when it comes to be done, we have so much trouble! We offer ourselves to God so often; we say to Him on every occasion, Lord, I am all yours, behold my heart; and when He wills to employ us, we are so cowardly! How can we say that we are all His, if we will not accommodate our will to His?

The second consideration is, to think on the nature of the commandments of God, which are sweet, gracious, and loving, not only those which are general, but also the particular commandments of each one's vocation.

What is it, then, that renders them hard to you? Nothing, in truth, except your own will, which wishes to reign in you at whatever cost; and the things which perhaps that will would desire, if they were not commanded, being commanded, it rejects. Among a thousand delicious fruits, Eve chose that which had been forbidden her, and which, no doubt, she would not have eaten, had she been at liberty to do so. In one word, we like to serve God according to our own will, and not according to His. Saul was ordered to smite Amalec and utterly destroy all that was there (1 Kings xv.); he did destroy every thing except what was valuable, and that he reserved and made a sacrifice of it. But God declared that He desired no sacrifice that was contrary to obedience.

God commands me to save souls, and I wish to remain in contemplation; the contemplative life is good, but not to the prejudice of obedience. It is not for us to choose according to our will; we must will what God wills; and if God wills that I should serve Him in one capacity, I must not will to serve Him in another. God wills Saul to serve Him in the quality of a king and captain, and Saul wills to serve Him in the quality of a priest and a sacrificer. There is no doubt that the latter quality is more excellent than the former; but nevertheless this is not the way to please God; He wills to be obeyed.

This is remarkable. God had given manna to the children of Israel, which was a most delicious viand, and they would none of it, but desired and longed for the onions of Egypt. (Numbers xi. 5.) Our feeble nature evermore wishes its own will to be done, and not God's will. But in proportion as we have less of our own will, that of God will be more easily observed.

The third consideration is, to reflect that there is no

vocation which has not its annoyances, bitternesses, and vexations ; and much more, if we except those who are fully resigned to the will of God, each person would willingly change his condition for that of others. Those who are married would wish not to be so ; and those who are single would wish to be married.

Whence comes this general disquietude of minds, unless from a certain dislike which we all have to constraint ? But it is all one. Whoever is not fully resigned, he may turn to this side or to that, he will never find repose. Those who have a fever find no place to their mind. They have not remained a quarter of an hour in one place, when they would be in another. It is not the bed that causes their restlessness, but the fever which torments them every where. A person who has not the fever of self-will is contented every where, provided that God is served. Such a one does not trouble himself about what capacity God employs him in ; provided that he does His divine will, it is to him all one.

But this is not all : we ought not only to do the will of God, but in order to be devout, we ought to do it cheerfully. If I were not a Bishop, it may be that, knowing what I do know, I would not wish to be one ; but being such, not only am I obliged to do what that painful vocation requires, but I ought also to do it joyously, and to be pleased with it, and find delight in it.

It was St. Paul's lesson, *Let every man wherein he was called, therein abide with God.* (1 Cor. vii. 24.) He must not bear other people's crosses, but his own cross ; and in order to bear his own, our Lord would have him deny himself (St. Matt. xvi. 24), that is to say, his own will. "I would like to have this or that ;" "I would be better in this place or that :"  
these are temptations. Our Lord knows well what

He is about ; let us do what He wills ; let us remain where He has placed us.

You ought not only to be devout and to love devotion, but you ought to make it amiable, profitable, and agreeable to each person. The sick will love your devotion, if they are charitably consoled by it ; your family will, if they find that it makes you more attentive to their good, more reasonable in the management of affairs, more gentle in reproving those who are subjected to you. Your husband will love it, if he perceive that in proportion as your devotion increases, you are more cordial with regard to him, and more kind in the affection you entertain towards him ; your relatives and friends will rejoice at it, if they observe in you more frankness, more support and compliance with their will when not contrary to that of God. In short, you ought, as far as possible, to render your devotion pleasing and amiable.

### CHAPTER III.

#### OTHER MEANS FOR ARRIVING AT DEVOTION.

Besides the considerations I have mentioned, attend to the following :

1. Always add to the end of your meditation each day a consideration of the obedience which our Lord exercised towards God His Father, for you will find that whatever He did, He did to please the will of His Father ; and hereupon excite yourself to a great love of the will of God.

2. Before employing yourself in any business of your vocation that annoys you, reflect that the Saints cheerfully did other things much greater and more annoying. Some of them suffered martyrdom, others suffered disgrace in the eyes of the world ; and all

this in order to do something that was pleasing to God. And what do we do that approaches to all that?

3. Often reflect that all that we do, derives its true value from the conformity which we have to the will of God; so that in eating and drinking, if I do it because it is the will of God that I do it, I am more pleasing to God than if I suffered death without that intention.

4. I would wish you frequently in the course of the day to invoke God, that He may give you the love of your vocation, and that you may say with St. Paul, when he was converted, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6.) Wouldst Thou have me serve Thee in the meanest employment in Thine house? Ah, I would still consider myself too happy; provided that I serve Thee, I do not trouble myself in what capacity. And coming in particular to what would give you annoyance, say: Wouldst Thou have me do such and such a thing? Alas, Lord, although I am not worthy of it, I will do it most willingly. O my God, what treasures you will gain in this way! greater, no doubt, than you can conceive.

5. I would have you consider how many Saints, men and women, have been in your vocation and in your state, and have all accommodated themselves to it with great sweetness and resignation, as well in the New as in the Old Testament,—Sara, Rebecca, St. Anne, St. Paula, St. Monica, and innumerable others: and let this encourage you, recommending yourself to their prayers. One ought to love what God loves: now He loves our vocation; let us love it also well, and let us not amuse ourselves by thinking about other people's vocations. Let us do our own work. To each one his cross; it is not too much. Sweetly mingle the offices of Martha and Magdalene. Fulfil diligently the service of your vocation, and often re-

turn to yourself, and place yourself in spirit at the feet of our Lord, and say: Lord, whether I run or whether I stay, I am all Thine, and Thou art all mine. Thou art my first spouse, and all that I do is for the love of Thee.

Remember what I have so often told you: Do honour to your devotion; make it very amiable to all who know you, and above all to your family; and act so that every person may speak well of you.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### MAXIMS FOR LIVING CONSTANTLY IN PIETY.

In order to live in piety, we have only to settle strong and excellent maxims in our mind.

The first maxim is that of St. Paul: *To them that love God, all things work together unto good.* (Rom. viii. 28.) And in truth: since God is able, and knows how, to draw good out of evil, for whom will He do it, if not for those who have given themselves without reserve to Him? Yes, even the sins from which God by His mercy preserves us, are turned by divine Providence to the advantage of those that are His. David would never have had such a depth of humility, if he had not sinned; nor Magdalene such a love for her Saviour, if He had not forgiven her so many sins; and He could never have forgiven them her, if she had not committed them. Tell me, then, I pray you, what will He not make of our afflictions, our sorrows, and the persecutions that are brought upon us? If, therefore, it ever occurs that any sorrow touches you, on whatever side it may be, assure your soul that if it loves God, all will turn out for good. And although you cannot see the means by which this good is to arise, remain so much the more assured that it will arise.

The second maxim is, that God is your Father ; for otherwise He would not have commanded you to say, *Our Father who art in heaven*. And what have you to fear ? you are the child of that Father, without whose providence not a hair of your head shall perish. (St. Luke xxi. 18.) It is a marvel that being children of such a Father, we have or can have any care but that of loving and serving Him well. Have the care which He wills you should have, and nothing more ; for doing so, you will see that He will have a care for you. *Think of Me*, He said to St. Catherine of Sienna, *and I will think of you*.

The third maxim you ought to have is that which our Lord taught to His Apostles. He had sent His Apostles hither and thither, without money, without staff, without shoes, without scrip, clad in a single coat ; and He says to them afterwards, *When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, did you want any thing ?* But they said, *Nothing*. (St. Luke xxii. 35.) I say the same to you. When you were under affliction, even at the time when you had not so much confidence in God, did you perish in affliction ? You will tell me, No. And wherefore, then, will you not have courage to succeed in all other adversities ? God has not abandoned you so far ; how should He abandon you now, when you are willing to be His more than before ?

Have no apprehensions for future evils of this world, for perhaps they will never come ; but in any case, if they do come, God will strengthen you. He commanded St. Peter to walk on the waves ; and St. Peter, beholding the wind and the storm, was fearful, and fear made him sink, and he asked his Master for help. But his Master said to him, *O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt ?* (St. Matt. xiv. 31.) And stretching forth His hand to him, He encouraged him.

If God wills you to walk upon the waves of adversity, do not doubt, do not be fearful, God is with you; be of good courage, and you will be delivered.

The fourth maxim is that of eternity. Of little consequence is it to be under affliction in these passing moments, provided that I am eternally in the glory of my God. We are going into eternity; we have, as it were, one foot there already. Provided it is a happy eternity for us, what matters it if these short moments are painful? Is it possible that we know our tribulations of three or four moments work for us so many eternal consolations, and yet we are not willing to endure them? In fine, what is not for eternity, can be nothing 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.* (Gal. vi. 14.) Plant Jesus Christ in your heart, and all the crosses of this world will only seem to you roses. Those who are wounded by the thorns of the crown of our Lord, who is our chief, hardly feel the smarts of other thorns.

## CHAPTER V.

### THAT DEVOTION OUGHT TO BE DISCREET.

It is true, as I have often told you, that discretion is a virtue without which, according to the testimony of St. Anthony, no virtue is virtue, not even devotion, if, indeed, real devotion could exist without real discretion.

This good lady complains wonderfully about her daughter, that having found a swarm of bees with their honey, she amuses herself too much with them, and eats too much of this honey, contrary to the advice of the Wise Man, who said, *Thou hast found honey; eat what is sufficient for thee.* (Prov. xxv. 16.)

She will have given you all her reasons in better terms than I could represent them to you.

Contribute, then, as much as you can to the satisfaction of this mother, by speaking to her daughter, that she may give up, I will not say a little, but a great deal of her consolations, no matter how spiritual they may be; to leave a great deal of them to her mother.

I confess that I do not know how it can happen that a mother of such talents, perfection, and piety, and a daughter of such great virtue and devotion, do not remain altogether united in that great God who is the God of union and of charity; but I know, nevertheless, that this does happen, and that even the angels, without ceasing to be angels, have contrary wills even upon the same subject, without falling, for all that, into either division or dissension; because they have a perfect love for the will of God, which, the moment it appears, is embraced and adored by them all.

Ah, my God, are there no means of helping these two ladies to understand that holy will? For I am certain it would range them both under its obedience.

To speak properly on this occasion, it would be necessary to hear both parties at length; but while this is impossible, one should speak on the side of the mother: there is always a just prejudice in her favour.

For the rest, she only wishes you to use your influence to moderate the zeal which her good daughter has for her retreats, which is a thing which cannot and ought not to be refused; moderation being always good in all exercises, except in that of the love of God, whom we ought not to love by measure, but altogether without measure.

Have the goodness, then, to interest yourself about this moderation, to which it will be very easy to bring this good daughter, since her good mother permits her to enjoy the devotion in peace all the great feasts of the year, and besides that, for three days every six weeks. This is a great deal; this is enough.

I assure myself, that after having invoked the Holy Ghost, He will give you light to bring about or to advise this moderation.

## CHAPTER VI.

THAT DEVOTION OUGHT TO BE SWEET, SIMPLE, AND PATIENT.

Remain firm; endeavour to be, as perfectly as you can, the servant of God. Take care to preserve sweetness. I do not tell you to love what you ought to love, for I know that you do so; but I tell you to be even-tempered, patient, and sweet. Repress the sallies of your somewhat too lively and ardent disposition.

I do not know what uneasiness you can have about your confessions, for you make very good ones. Abide, therefore, in peace before our Lord, who hath loved you this long time, giving you His most holy fear, and the desire of His love. But if you have not corresponded to it well up to this time, the remedy is easy; you must correspond to it well for the future.

Your miseries and infirmities ought not to astonish you. God has seen many more of them; and His compassion does not reject the miserable, but He exercises Himself in doing them good, placing the seat of His glory in their abjection.

I wish I had a good hammer to blunt the edge of your spirit, which is too subtle in thinking about your advancement.

I have often said to you, that one should go on

with devotion in good faith, and, as it were, in a simple open-handed manner. If you do well, praise God for it; if you do ill, humiliate yourself. I am sure that you would never do ill of deliberate purpose; other evils only serve for humiliation.

Do not, therefore, be afraid, and do not be so ready to argue with your conscience; for you know too well that after all your pains there remains nothing more for you in the sight of our Lord except to entreat His love, which desires nothing of you but yours.

Do so, and diligently cultivate sweetness and interior humility. I incessantly wish a thousand benedictions for you; and above all, that you may be humble, sweet, and patient, and that you may turn your sorrows to profit by accepting them lovingly for the love of Him who suffered so much for the love of you.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THAT DEVOTION OUGHT TO BE INTIMATE AND STRONG.

It is necessary to make it a particular object, to nourish in our heart an intimate and strong devotion. I say intimate, in such a way as to have our will conformed to the good actions we do outwardly, whether little or great; to do nothing from custom, but by choice and application of the will; and if sometimes the outward affection anticipates the interior affection in consequence of habit, at least let the latter closely follow it. If before bowing to my inferior, I have not made the interior inclination by a humble act of election to be subject to him, at least let this election accompany or closely follow the outward act of homage.

It is also necessary that this devotion be strong:

1. To support temptations, which rarely fail those who wish in good earnest to serve God.

2. Strong, to support the variety of tempers amidst which we have to live, which is a temptation as great as can be met with for feeble souls.

3. Strong, to support our own imperfections, so as not to disquiet ourselves at seeing ourselves subject to them; for as it is necessary to have a strong humility, not to lose courage, but to raise our confidence in God in the midst of our weaknesses, so ought we to have a powerful courage to take in hand the task of correcting ourselves, and bringing about a perfect reformation of our souls.

4. Strong, to combat our imperfections.

5. Strong, to despise the words and judgments of the world, which never fails to attempt to control those who give themselves up to devotion, especially at the commencement.

6. Strong, to keep ourselves independent of particular affections, friendships, or inclinations, so as not to live according to our inclinations, but according to the light of true piety.

7. Strong, to keep ourselves independent of the tendernesses, sweetnesses, and consolations which come to us as well from God as from creatures, so as not to surrender ourselves to them.

8. Strong, to carry on a continual war against our bad inclinations, humours, habits, and propensities.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THAT DEVOTION OUGHT TO BE GENEROUS.

Devotion, moreover, ought to be generous, so as not to be surprised at difficulties, but to augment its courage by them. For, as St. Bernard says, he is not

very valiant whose heart does not grow bolder in the midst of pains and contradictions.

Generous, to aim at the highest point of Christian perfection, in spite of all present imperfections and weaknesses, resting with perfect confidence on the divine mercy, after the example of her who said to the Beloved: *Draw me; we will run after Thee in the odour of Thy ointments* (Cant. i. 3); as though she would have said, "Of myself I am immovable; but when Thou drawest me I shall run."

The divine Lover of our souls often leaves us, as it were, entangled in our miseries, in order that we may know that our deliverance comes from Him, and that when we have it we may cherish it as a precious gift of His goodness. This is the reason why, as generous devotion never ceases to cry unto God, "Draw me," so it never ceases to aspire, to hope, and to promise to itself always to run courageously, and to say, "We will run after Thee;" and we ought never to distress ourselves if at first we do not run after the Saviour, provided we always say, "Draw me," and provided we have the good courage to add, "We will run after Thee." For although we run not, it is enough that, God aiding us, we shall run.

The communities which are in the Church are not assemblages of perfect persons, but of persons who aim at perfection; not of persons who run, but who aim at running, and who for that reason learn first to walk step by step, then to hasten, and at length to run.

This generous devotion despises nothing, and causes us without trouble or inquietude to see each one walk and run, and walk and run differently, according to the diversity of inspirations and the variety of the measures of divine grace which he receives.

It is a great admonition which the holy Apostle gives us in his epistle to the Romans (xiv. 3-6) : *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not ; and he that eateth not, let him not judge him that eateth ; let every man abound in his own sense. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth thanks unto God.* "Let every man abound in his own sense:" that is to say, let him enjoy and use his liberty without judging or controlling others who do not do the same, or wishing to make them think his own way the best ; since it may even happen that one person eats with as much renunciation of his own will as another exercises in fasting.

Generous devotion does not wish to have companions in every thing it does, but only in its aim, which is the glory of God, and the advancement of our neighbour in divine love ; and provided that it goes straight to that end, it does not trouble itself by what road : provided that he who fasts, fasts for God, and that he who fasts not, also for God fasts not, it is as content with the one as with the other.

Generous devotion, then, does not wish to attract others to its own mode of life, but it follows its own path simply, humbly, tranquilly.

But even if it did happen that a person ate, not for God, but from inclination, still it would be necessary that those who do the contrary judge him not ; but that without censuring him, they follow their own path sweetly, without despising or judging to the prejudice of the weak ; recollecting that if on these occasions those persons yield perhaps too weakly to their inclinations, the others on other occasions do much the same. But those also who have these inclinations ought to be very much on their guard against saying any thing, or giving any sign that they

are displeased that others do better, for herein they would commit a great fault; but considering their own weakness, they ought to regard those who do better with a holy, sweet, and cordial reverence; and by so doing, they will be able to derive as much profit from their weakness, by the humility which will arise from it, as the others will derive from what they do. If this point is well understood and well observed, it will preserve in souls a marvellous tranquillity of mind and a great sweetness of heart. Let Martha be active, but let her not control Mary. Let Mary be contemplative, but let her not despise Martha; for our Lord will take up the defence of her who is censured.

Nevertheless, those who have aversions to pious practices, or inclinations to practices of less piety, will, if they take my advice, use violence, and oppose themselves as much as they can to their aversions and inclinations, in order truly to conquer themselves, and to serve God by this excellent mortification, making the authority of reason reign in every thing and every where.

Lastly, they will endeavour to have a pliable and manageable heart, ready and easy to yield in all permitted things, and to shew obedience and charity on all occasions, so as to resemble the dove, whose feathers reflect all the colours of the light. Blessed are the pliable hearts, for they will never break.

## CHAPTER IX.

OF THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY, AND OF THE MARKS BY WHICH  
IT IS KNOWN.

Behold the general rule of our obedience, written in large letters: *We must do every thing by love, and nothing by force. We must love obedience more than we fear disobedience.* I leave you the spirit of liberty,

not that which excludes obedience, for that is the liberty of the flesh, but that which excludes constraint, scrupulosity, or anxiety. Now I will tell you what is the spirit of liberty. Every good man has the liberty or power to commit mortal sins, and does in nowise attach his affection to this : here is a liberty necessary to salvation. I am not speaking of that ; the liberty of which I speak is the liberty of well-beloved children. And what is that ? It is a disengagement of the Christian heart from all things, to follow the will of God. You will easily understand what I mean to say, if God gives me the grace to point out to you the marks, the signs, the effects, and the occasions of this liberty.

We ask of God, before all things, that *His name be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done in earth as it is in heaven.* All this is nothing else but the spirit of liberty ; for provided that His name is hallowed, that His majesty reigns in us, that His will is done, the spirit of liberty does not trouble itself about any thing else.

First mark. The soul which has this liberty is not attached to consolations, but receives affliction with all the sweetness which the flesh can permit. I do not say that it does not love and desire consolations, but I say that it does not set its heart upon them.

Second mark. It in nowise fixes its affection on particular spiritual exercises ; so that if, in consequence of sickness or any other accident, it is hindered, it does not distress itself about them. I again do not say that it does not love them, but I say that it does not set its heart upon them.

Third mark. It rarely loses its joy of heart, because no privation can sadden him who has not his heart set upon any thing. I do not say that it never loses it, but it is only for a little while.

## CHAPTER X.

OF THE EFFECTS OF THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY, AND OF THE OCCASIONS FOR PRACTISING IT.

The effects of this liberty are a great sweetness of spirit, a great gentleness and readiness to yield wherever there is not sin or danger of sin. It creates a disposition sweetly pliable in the action of all virtue and charity. For example, a soul that has attached itself to the exercise of meditation; interrupt it, and you will see it lay aside that exercise with some expression of annoyance, disturbed and put out. A soul which has true liberty, will lay aside its meditation with an even countenance, and a heart graciously disposed towards the troublesome person who may have caused it inconvenience; for to such a soul it is all one whether it serves God by meditating, or serves Him by bearing with its neighbour. Both the one and the other is the will of God; but to bear with its neighbour is necessary at that particular moment.

The occasions of this liberty are all things which occur contrary to our inclination; for whoever has not his inclinations fixed, is not disquieted when they meet with opposition. This liberty has two vices opposed to it—instability of spirit and constraint. Instability of spirit is a certain excess of liberty, by which one would be ready to change one's exercises and state of life without reason, or without knowing what the will of God may be. On the least occasion such persons change their exercises, purpose, and rule. For the most trifling occurrence, they lay aside their rule or praiseworthy custom; and by that means the heart dissipates and loses itself: it becomes like a garden open on all sides, the fruits of which are not for the master, but for all the passers-by. Constraint

is a certain deficiency in liberty, by which the spirit is overwhelmed either with weariness or anger when it cannot do what it has determined on, although it might be able to do something better. For example, I determine to make a meditation every day in the morning: if I have the spirit of instability, on the least occasion in the world I defer it till the evening; for the barking of a dog that has prevented my sleeping; for a letter I must needs write, though there is no pressing necessity for it. On the contrary, if I have the spirit of constraint, I refuse to omit my meditation, although a sick person has great need of my assistance during that hour; although I have a despatch of great importance, and which cannot well be deferred; and so of other subjects.

We must nevertheless observe two rules, in order not to fail in this.

The first is, that a person ought never to lay aside his exercises and the common rules of the virtues, unless he sees the will of God on the other side. Now the will of God manifests itself in two ways, by necessity and by charity. I wish to preach this Lent: if, however, I fall sick or break my leg, I have no business to regret and to vex myself about not preaching; for it is a certain thing, that the will of God is, that I should serve Him by suffering and not by preaching. Or again, if I am not sick, but an occasion presents itself for going to some other place, where, if I do not go, the people will turn Protestants, here the will of God is sufficiently evident to make me gently change my purpose.

The second rule is, that when it is necessary to use liberty from a motive of charity, this must be done without scandal and without injustice. For example, I know that I would be more useful elsewhere, at a distance from my sphere of duty: I ought

not to use liberty in this case, because I should give scandal and do injustice, since I am bound to be here. So it is a false liberty for married women to separate themselves from their husbands without lawful reason, under pretext of devotion and charity. So that this liberty never prejudices vocations: on the contrary, it makes each one satisfied with his own vocation, since each one ought to know that it is the will of God he should remain in it.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EXAMPLES OF THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY.

It remains for me to give you two or three examples of this liberty, which will make you understand better what I cannot adequately express. I wish you to consider Cardinal Borromeo: his was the most exact, the most rigid, and the most austere spirit that can be imagined. His only food was bread, his only drink water. So exact was he, that after he was archbishop, in the course of twenty-four years he only twice entered the house of his brothers, they being sick, and only twice walked in his garden; and nevertheless, that man, rigorous as he was (having occasion frequently to eat in company with the Swiss, his neighbours, to gain them over and induce them to act better), made no difficulty about drinking with them and proposing their healths at each meal, besides what he drank to satisfy thirst. This was a trait of holy liberty in the most austere man of this age. A spirit without control would have done too much of it; a spirit under constraint would have thought it was committing mortal sin; a spirit of liberty acted as I have described, from charity.

Spiridion, an ancient bishop, having received a pilgrim almost dying of hunger in the season of Lent,

and in a place where there was nothing to be had but salted meat, caused this meat to be cooked, and presented it to the pilgrim, who refused to eat of it, notwithstanding his necessity. Spiridion, who was under no necessity, ate of it the first, in order, by his example, to take away the scruples of the pilgrim.

St. Ignatius Loyola, on Holy Thursday, ate meat on the simple order of the physician, who judged it expedient for a slight sickness he had. A spirit of constraint would have made him pray for three days.

But I wish, after all this, to invite you to look upon a very sun, upon a true spirit, frank and free from all entanglement, and which held only to God's will. I have often thought, what was the greatest mortification of all the saints whose lives I am acquainted with? and, after many considerations, I think the greatest was this. St. John the Baptist went into the desert at the age of five years, and knew that our Saviour and his was born quite near to him. God knows how the heart of St. John, touched with the love of his Saviour from his mother's womb, must have desired to enjoy His holy presence. He, nevertheless, passed twenty-five years in the desert without once coming to see our Lord; and he waited for Himself to come to him. After that, having baptised Him, he does not follow Him, but remains to fulfil his duty. O God, what mortification of spirit! To be so near his Saviour, and not to see Him! To have Him so close at hand, and not to enjoy Him! And what was this but to have his spirit disengaged of every thing, and even of God, in order to do the will of God and to serve Him? To leave God for God, and to deprive himself of God in order to love Him so much the better and the more purely? This example overwhelms my mind with its greatness.

I forgot to observe, that not only is the will of God made known by necessity and charity, but furthermore by obedience; in such a way, that he who receives a command ought to believe that it is the will of God.

## CHAPTER XII.

THAT PROGRESS IN PIETY DOES NOT CONSIST IN MULTIPLYING THE EXERCISES OF IT.

Some time ago, there were some holy religious who said to me, "Sir, what shall we do this year? Last year we fasted three times a week, and we took the discipline as often; what shall we do now? Surely we must do something more, as well to render thanks to God for the past year, as to go on always increasing in the ways of God."

"You have said well that we ought always to go forward," replied I; "but our advancement is not brought about, as you think, by the multitude of exercises of piety, but by the perfection with which we do them, reposing ever more and more trust in our Lord, and more and more distrusting ourselves. Last year you fasted three times a week, and you took the discipline three times. If you wish always to double your exercises, this year it will be the entire week; but next year how will you manage? You will be obliged to make nine days in the week, or to fast twice in the day."

Great is their folly who amuse themselves with desiring to be martyred in the Indies, and do not apply themselves to what they have to do in the place where their vocation is appointed. Greatly also are they deceived who would eat more than they are able to digest. We have not sufficient spiritual heat to digest well all that we take in for our perfection, and nevertheless we are unwilling to cut off those anxieties which make us so desirous of doing a great deal.

To read store of spiritual books, especially when they are new—to speak much of God and of spiritual things—to excite ourselves, as we say, to devotion—to hear abundance of sermons and conferences—to communicate often—to confess still oftener—to wait upon the sick—to speak copiously of all that passes in our mind, in order to manifest the aim which we have of arriving at perfection, and doing so speedily; are not all these means very well adapted for perfecting ourselves?

Yes, provided that all is done according as it is ordered, and that it is always with dependence on the grace of God; that is to say, that we do not put our confidence in all this, good as it is, but in God alone, who only can enable us to draw fruit from our exercises.

Consider, I entreat you, the life of those great saints of the desert, of a St. Anthony, who was honoured of God and man by reason of his very great holiness. Tell me how did he arrive at that? Was it by dint of reading, or by conferences and frequent communion, or by the multitude of sermons which he heard? Not so; for he did not know how to read, and he had no preachers to hear. How, then, did he arrive at it? It was by making use of the examples of the holy hermits, copying from one his abstinence, from another his prayer; and thus he went about, like a busy bee, picking and gathering the virtues of the servants of God, to compose out of them the honey of a holy edification. You may say the same of St. Paul, the first hermit, of St. Pacomius, and of so many others who were models of perfection.

What means it, then, that these holy solitaries, eating so little of those spiritual viands which nourish our souls unto immortality, were nevertheless always in such good case—that is to say, so strong and so

courageous in undertaking the acquisition of the virtues, and in going on to perfection; whilst we, who eat much, are always so thin—that is to say, so cowardly and languishing in the pursuit of our designs? And it seems as if we had no courage and no vigour in the service of our Lord, if we are not supported by spiritual consolations.

We ought, then, to imitate those holy religious, applying ourselves to our work, that is to say, to what God demands of us according to our vocation, fervently and humbly; and to think only of this, considering that we cannot find any better means of perfecting ourselves than this.

But perhaps some one will reply, “ You say *fervently*. My God! and how can I do this, for I have no fervour at all?” Not that which you mean so far as regards sensible feeling, which God gives to whom He thinks fit, and which it is not in our power to have when we please. I add also *humbly*; and do not say, “ I have no humility, and it is not in my power to have it,” for the Holy Spirit, who is goodness itself, gives it to whosoever asks for it: but not that humility, or if you please, that sensible feeling of our own littleness, which leads us to humble ourselves so gracefully in every thing; but that humility which makes us know our own abjectness, and which makes us love it; for that is true humility.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### OF MENTAL PRAYER.

The first method of mental prayer is, to carry to it some point wherewith to occupy one's mind, such as the mysteries of the life, death, and passion of our Lord, which are the most useful; and very rarely indeed is it that one cannot profit by the consideration of

what our Saviour did, said, or suffered. He is the sovereign Master, whom the Eternal Father sent into this world to teach us what we ought to do; and consequently, besides the obligation we are under of forming ourselves upon this divine model, we ought to be very exact in considering His actions, His words, and His sufferings, in order to imitate them by practising the virtues, because our Father and our Master practised them; and in order to comprehend them well, it is necessary faithfully to weigh them, to see and consider them, in mental prayer.

What you say is true, that there are souls who cannot fix themselves or occupy their minds on any mystery, being attracted to a certain sweet simplicity, which holds them in great tranquillity before God, without any other consideration except to know that they are before Him, and that He is all their good. If they can thus remain profitably, it is good; but, generally speaking, all ought to manage to begin by that method of mental prayer which is the surest, and which leads to the reformation of life and change of manners, which is the kind we speak of, and which consists in the consideration of the mysteries of the life and death of our Saviour. It is necessary, then, to apply oneself in all good faith to our Master, to learn what He would have us do; and those who are able to avail themselves of the imagination even ought to do so, but it is necessary to use it soberly, very simply, and briefly.

The holy fathers have left several pious and devout considerations, of which use may be made, on this subject; for since these great and holy persons made them, who shall hesitate to make use of them, and piously to believe what they most piously believed? We ought to follow in security persons of such an authority. But people are not content with what they

have left; some have devised abundance of other imaginations; and it is these of which we ought not to make use in meditation, inasmuch as they may prove prejudicial.

The second method of mental prayer is, not to make use of the imagination at all, but to meditate purely and simply on the Gospel and the mysteries of our faith, entertaining ourselves familiarly and in all simplicity with our Lord, on what He has done, said, and suffered for us, without any representation. Now this method is much better and safer than the first. This is why it is necessary to incline to it the more easily, however little *attrait* one may have for it, observing in every degree of prayer to keep one's spirit in a holy liberty to follow the lights and movements which God shall give us in it; but for the other more elevated modes of devotion, unless God absolutely gives them to us, I beg of you not to urge your mind towards them yourself, or without the advice of those who direct you.

We ought to make our resolutions in the fervour of prayer, when the Sun of Justice enlightens us and excites us by His inspiration. I do not mean by this to say that we must needs have great sentiments and great resolutions, although when God gives them to us we are obliged to turn them to our profit, and to correspond with His love: but when He does not give them, we ought not to fail in fidelity; on the contrary, we ought to live according to reason and the Divine will, and make our resolutions at the point of our spirit in the superior part of our soul, not omitting to put them into effect and to practise them, in spite of the drynesses, repugnances, or contradictions which may present themselves.

To make mental prayer profitable, we ought to have a great determination never to abandon it for

any difficulty which may arise, and not to go to it with the previous idea of being consoled and satisfied by it; for that would not be to unite and conform our will to that of our Lord, who would have us, when entering into mental prayer, to be resolved to suffer the distractions, the drynesses, and disgusts which we may meet with in it, remaining as content as if we had had a great deal of consolation and tranquillity, since it is certain that our prayer will not be the less agreeable to God, or the less profitable, because it is made with the greater difficulty; for provided that we always conform our will to that of His Divine Majesty, remaining always in a simple readiness and disposition to receive the events of His good pleasure with love, whether it is in prayer or on other occasions, He will order it so that all things shall be profitable to us, and, at the same time, pleasing in the eyes of His Divine Goodness. We shall, therefore, be making our meditation well, if we keep ourselves in peace and tranquillity near our Lord, or in His sight, without any other aim than to be with Him and to please Him.

Those greatly deceive themselves who consider that for mental prayer there is required an abundance of methods, and a certain art which consists, according to them, in subtilising and refining on their meditation, to see how they are doing it, or how they may do it to satisfy themselves, thinking that one must neither cough nor move for fear the Spirit of God should withdraw itself. A great deceit, indeed; as if the Spirit of God was so delicate, that it depended on the method and the countenance of those who perform the meditation.

I do not say that one ought not to use the methods I have alluded to; but I do say that one ought not to attach oneself to them, as those do who think

that they have not made their meditation well, if they do not place their considerations before the affections, which latter are nevertheless the end for which we make the considerations. Such persons resemble those who, finding themselves at the place whither they wanted to go, return again, because they had not arrived by the road they had been told to go.

Further, it is necessary to hold oneself in great reverence when speaking to the Divine Majesty, since the angels, who are so pure, tremble in His presence. But, my God, some one will say, I cannot always have this feeling of the presence of God, which causes so great a humiliation in the soul, nor this sensible reverence, which so sweetly and delightfully annihilates me before God. But it is not of this sort of reverence I mean to speak, but of that which makes the highest part and the very edge of our souls hold themselves lowly and humbled in the presence of God, in acknowledgment of His infinite greatness, and of our profound littleness and unworthiness.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

You have too good a courage not to do perfectly what you ought to do for the love of Him who wills not to be loved except wholly. Go on, therefore, courageously in this way, with your spirit raised unto God, and looking only at the countenance and the eyes of the heavenly Spouse, to do all things according to His will; and do not doubt but that He will diffuse over you His holy grace, to give you strength equal to the courage with which He has inspired you.

The holy gift of prayer is already in the right hand of the Saviour, the moment that you shall be empty of yourself, that is to say, of this love of your

body and of your own will. When you shall be thoroughly humble, He will pour it into your heart. Have patience to go step by step, until you have legs to run, or rather wings to fly with. God will fill your vessel with His balm, when He shall see it void of the perfumes of this world.

Often call to mind that the graces and the goods of prayer are not waters of the earth, but of the heavens; and that therefore all our efforts cannot acquire them, although the truth is, that we ought to dispose ourselves for them with diligence: let that diligence be great, but humble and tranquil. We ought to keep our heart open unto heaven, and wait for the holy dew.

Never forget to bring to mental prayer this consideration, that by it one approaches unto God, and that one places one's self in His presence for two principal reasons.

The first, that we may render unto God the honour and homage which we owe to Him; and this cannot be done unless He speaks unto us, and we unto Him: for this duty is fulfilled by our acknowledging that He is our God, and we His vile creatures, and by remaining before Him prostrate in spirit, waiting for His orders. How many courtiers are there who go a hundred times into the presence of the king, not to speak to him nor to hear him, but simply to be seen by him, and to testify by this assiduity that they are his servants! And this end of presenting ourselves before God, solely to lay our will prostrate before Him, to testify unto Him our utter devotion to His service, is very excellent, very holy, and very pure, and consequently belongs to very great perfection.

The second is, that we may speak with Him, and hear Him speak unto us by these inspirations and in-

terior movements ; and ordinarily this is done with a most delicious pleasure, because it is a great good to us to speak to so great a Lord ; and when He answers, He diffuses a thousand balms, which give a great sweetness to the soul. But one of these two goods can never fail you in mental prayer. When, therefore, you appear before our Lord, speak to Him if you can ; if you cannot, abide there, make Him see you, and do not be anxious about other matters.

## CHAPTER XV.

## CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

Your manner of meditation is very good, and much better than if you made in it considerations and reasonings, since considerations and reasonings are of no use, except to excite the affections ; so that if it pleases God to give us the affections without reasonings or considerations, that is a great grace to us. The secret of secrets in meditation is to follow the *traits* in simplicity of heart.

Take the trouble to read the seventh book of the treatise on the Love of God, and you will there find all that will be necessary for you to know about mental prayer ; and although you must bring one or more points with you to the meditation, if nevertheless God attracts you to some affection, you must not attach yourself to the point, but follow the affection : and the more simple and tranquil it is, the better it is ; for it attaches the more strongly the spirit to its object.

Being once for all instructed on this point, never amuse yourself during the meditation with wishing to know what you are doing and how you are praying ; for the best prayer or meditation is that which

keeps us so well employed in God, that we do not think at all of ourselves, or of what we are doing.

Lastly, we ought to enter on prayer simply, in good faith, and without art, in order to be near God, to love Him, and to unite ourselves to Him. Do not force yourself to speak in this divine love; sufficiently does he speak who gazes and makes himself seen. Follow, then, the path to which you are attracted by the Holy Spirit, yet without failing to prepare yourself for meditation; for that is what you ought to do on your side, and you ought not of yourself to attempt any other way; but when you would place yourself in that path, if God attracts you to another, go thither with Him. We ought on our side to make a preparation proportionate to our powers; and when God shall lead us higher, to Him alone be the glory.

But if, after having applied our spirit to this humble preparation, God notwithstanding does not give us sweetnesses and consolations, then we must abide in patience to eat our dry bread, and fulfil our duty without present recompense.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

You do nothing, you tell me, in meditation. But what would you have yourself do, except what you already do in it, which is to present and represent to God your nothingness and your miseries? It is the most pathetic speech that mendicants address to us, to expose to our eyes their ulcers and their necessities.

But still sometimes you do nothing of all this, as you tell me, but you remain yonder like a phantom or a statue. Well, even that is not so little. In the

palaces of princes and kings they place statues which serve only to recreate the eyes of the prince. Be contented, then, to serve for that purpose in the presence of God. He will animate this statue when it shall please Him.

The trees produce fruit only by the presence of the sun, some sooner and others later; some every year, and others once in three years, and not always in equal quantity. We are happy to be able to remain in the presence of God; and let us content ourselves, since He will make us bring forth our fruit either sooner or later, either every day or from time to time, according to His good pleasure, to which we ought fully to resign ourselves.

It is a maxim of marvellous efficacy, that which you tell me of: "Let God put me in what service He wills, 'tis all one to me, provided that I serve Him." But take care to chew it well over and over in your mind; make it melt in your mouth, and do not swallow it whole. St. Teresa, whom you love so much, of which I am very glad, says somewhere that we very often say such words from habit and a certain slight idea of them, and we fancy that they are spoken from the deep of our heart, although it was nothing of the sort, as we afterwards discover by our practice.

Well, you tell me that in whatever service God puts you, it is all one to you. But you know well in what service He has put you, and in what state and condition; and do you say to me, it is all one to you? My God, how subtly does self-love intrude itself amidst our affections, however pious they appear to be!

Here is the great maxim. We must look to what God wills, and discerning His will, we must attempt to fulfil it cheerfully, or at least courageously; and not

only that, but we must love this will of God, and the obligation which results from it, even were it to herd swine all our life, and to do the most abject things in the world. For in whatever service God puts us, that ought to be all one to us. Here is the very centre of the target of perfection, at which we ought all to aim, and whoever approaches it the nearest is the winner of the prize. Courage, I implore you. Accustom your will, little by little, to follow that of God, to whatever place it leads you. Let your will feel sharply goaded when your conscience shall say to it, God wills it.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

Your meditation is good. Only be very faithful to abide near God in this sweet and tranquil attention of heart, and in this sweet acquiescence with His holy will; for all this is pleasing to Him. Avoid any violent application of the understanding, since such is injurious to you, and busy yourself around your beloved object with the affections, in all simplicity, and as sweetly as you can.

It cannot be helped that the understanding now and then makes attempts to apply itself, and there is no occasion to be on the watch to hinder it from doing so, for that would only be a distraction to you; but you ought to content yourself, when you perceive it, with returning simply to the actions of the will. To keep oneself in the presence of God, and to place oneself in the presence of God, are, in my opinion, two things: for in order to place oneself there, one ought to withdraw one's soul from every other object, and render it actually attentive to this presence; but after one has placed oneself in

it, one always keeps oneself in it, so long as, either by the understanding or by the will, one performs actions towards God: whether regarding Him, or regarding something else for the love of Him; or regarding nothing, but speaking to Him; or neither regarding Him nor speaking to Him, but simply abiding where He has placed us.

And when to this simple abiding there is added some feeling that we are God's, and that He is our all, we ought to render great thanks to His goodness for this. If a statue, which had been placed in a niche or in the midst of a hall, had the power of speech, and were asked the question, "Wherefore art thou there?" "Because," it would reply, "the statuary my master placed me here." "Wherefore dost thou not move?" "Because he wills that I should remain in my place immovably." "What use art thou of, then? What advantage dost thou derive from being thus stationary?" "It is not for my own service that I am here; it is to serve and obey the will of my master." "But dost thou not see him?" "No," the statue would reply; "but he sees me, and takes pleasure in knowing that I am where he has placed me." "But wouldst not thou be glad to have the power of moving, in order to go nearer to him?" "Not unless he commanded me to do so." "Desirest thou, then, nothing?" "No; for I am where my master has placed me, and his pleasure is the only contentment of my being."

My God, it is indeed a good meditation, and a good mode of keeping oneself in the presence of God, that of keeping oneself in His will and in His good pleasure. It is my opinion that St. Mary Magdalen was a statue in a niche, when, without saying 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 ceased to speak, she ceased to hear, and nevertheless she was always there. A little infant who is laid on the bosom of its sleeping mother, is truly in its good and desirable place, though she says not a word to it, nor it to her.

My God, how happy we are when we will to love our Lord! Let us love Him, then, well; and let us not set ourselves to consider too much in detail what we do for His love, provided that we know that we never will to do any thing except for His love.

For myself, I think that we keep ourselves in the presence of God even in sleep; for we betake ourselves to sleep in His sight, at His good pleasure, and by His will; and when we wake, we find that He is there, nigh unto us: He has not moved, nor have we. We have, then, kept ourselves in His presence, though with our eyes closed.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OF DISTRACTIONS.

You ask me how you are to act in order to bring your spirit straight to God, without looking either to the right hand or to the left?

This proposition is so much the more pleasing to me because it carries its own answer with it. You must do as you say, go straight to God without looking to the right hand or to the left.

I see well enough that this is not what you ask me; but your question is, how you ought to act, so to strengthen your spirit in God, that nothing may be able to detach it from Him.

Two things are necessary for this, death and salvation; for after that, there will be no more separa-

tion, and your spirit will be indissolubly attached and united to its God.

You tell me that this, again, is not what you ask ; but what you are to do in order to prevent the least fly from drawing away your spirit from God, as happens but too often.

You apparently mean to say, the least distraction ; but you ought to know, that the least fly of distraction does not draw away your spirit from God, for nothing draws us away from God but sin ; and the resolution which we have made in the morning to keep our spirit united to God, and attentive to His presence, makes us remain there always, even when we sleep, since we do so in the name of God, and according to His most holy will.

Even venial sins are not capable of turning us aside from the path which conducts to God. They doubtless stop us somewhat in our road, but they do not turn us aside from it, and much less do simple distractions.

As for mental prayer, it is not the less profitable or less pleasing to God for having in it many distractions ; on the contrary, it will perhaps be more profitable to us than if we had much consolation, because there is thus more labour in it ; provided, nevertheless, that we have the will to draw ourselves away from these distractions, and that we do not voluntarily allow our mind to rest upon them.

It is the same with the trouble which we have all through the day in fixing our mind on God and heavenly things, provided that we take pains to recal our mind, and to hinder it from running after these flies, persevering with patience, and not tiring of our toil, which is endured for the love of God.

A careful distinction must be made between God and the feeling of God, between faith and the feeling of faith. A person who is going to suffer martyrdom

for God does not always think upon God during that time ; and although he has not at that moment the feeling of faith, he does not for all that fail to merit it, or to make an act of very great love. It is the same with the presence of God ; we must be contented with considering that He is our God, and that we are His feeble creatures, unworthy of this honour, as St. Francis did, who passed a whole night saying to God, “ Who art Thou, and who am I ? ”

## CHAPTER XIX.

### OF GOOD DESIRES, AND OF UNSUITABLE THOUGHTS IN MEDITATION.

There are two sorts of good desires : one, those which augment the grace and the glory of the servants of God ; the other, those which do nothing. Desires of the first sort are thus expressed : I would desire, for example, to give alms ; but I give them not, because I have not wherewithal ; and these desires greatly increase charity and sanctify the soul. Thus pious souls desire martyrdom, disgraces, and the cross, which nevertheless they are unable to obtain. Desires of the second sort are thus expressed : I would desire to give alms, but I do not will to give them ; and these desires are not sin by impossibility, but by cowardice, tepidity, and defect of courage. This is why they are useless and do not sanctify the soul, nor give it any increase of grace ; and of these desires St. Bernard says that hell is full of them.

The souls which are tempted by unsuitable thoughts in the meditation of the life and death of the Saviour ought, as much as they can, to represent to themselves the mysteries simply by faith, without making use of the imagination. For example, my Saviour was crucified, is a proposition of the faith : it suffices that I

conceive of it simply, without imagining to myself His body extended on the cross; and when unsuitable thoughts occur, we ought to turn them aside by affections proceeding from faith. O crucified Jesus, I adore Thee! I adore Thy torments, Thy pains, Thy labour! Thou art my salvation. As for thinking, on account of these troublesome thoughts, of giving up the meditation of the life and death of our Lord, this would be to play the game of the enemy, who tries by this means to deprive us of our greatest happiness.

## CHAPTER XX.

## OF DRYNESSES IN PRAYER.

Keep your heart at large; do not press it too much by desires of perfection. Have one of these, a good one, thoroughly resolved and thoroughly constant. I mean the old one, which made you give yourself to God with so much courage. This desire you must diligently water with the dew of holy prayer. You must take great pains to preserve it, for it is the tree of life. But as for certain desires which tyrannise over the heart, which would have nothing oppose itself to our designs, which would have no clouds, but insist that every thing should be in broad noon-day; which would have nothing but sweetness in our exercises, no disgusts, no opposition, no distraction; and the moment any interior temptation arises, are not contented with our not consenting to them, but would have us not feel them; desires so delicate, that they are not contented if we are fed with juicy and nourishing viands, unless they are all sugared over; which would have us not even see the summer-flies of August pass before our eyes; these are desires after too sweet a perfection; we ought to mistrust them. Believe me, sweet food engenders

worms in little children, and even in those who are not little children. This is why our Saviour mingles them for us with bitterness.

I wish you to have a great courage, and not one so tender; a courage which, whilst it can say very resolutely, "Live, Jesus!" without reserve, does not trouble itself either with the sweet or the bitter, with light or with shade.

Let us walk boldly in this love of our God, essential, strong, and unpliant; and let us allow those phantoms of temptations to run hither and thither; let them cross our path as much as they please. "Ah!" said St. Antony, "I see you; but I do not regard you." No, let us regard our Saviour, who waits for us beyond all these flourishes of the enemy. Let us implore His succour; for it is for this that He permits these illusions to terrify us.

Courage: have we not reason to believe that our Lord loves us? Most certainly we have. Wherefore, then, distress ourselves about temptations? I recommend to you our simplicity, which is so agreeable to the Spouse; and still more our humility, which has so much credit with Him.

I have, as it appears to me, more will and desire to love our Saviour than I ever had. Blessed and praised be His holy name! Are we not too happy in knowing that we must love God, and that all our happiness consists in serving Him, all our glory in honouring him? Oh, how great is His goodness over us!

## CHAPTER XXI.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

No, the Lord will not suffer it; no, I will not trouble myself; I will have no fears, I will have no doubts, either for your helplessness or the pain in

your head; because having once begotten you in Christ Jesus, and placed you in the hands of the Blessed Virgin, she has taken you under her protection, and my chief care is removed. This is the first reason why I have no fears.

The other reason is, that there is nothing to fear. At the death of our sweet Jesus, He made darkness to come upon the earth. I think that Magdalen, who was with the Blessed Virgin, was very mortified that she was no longer able to see her dear Lord: she was nevertheless as near to Him as before. Let it alone; all is going on right: as much darkness as you please, but nevertheless we are near the light; as much helplessness as you please, but we are at the feet of the Almighty. Live, Jesus! may we never separate ourselves from Him, whether in darkness or in light.

You do not know what I think of your asking me for remedies; it is, that I do not remember that our Lord ever gave command to heal the head of the daughter of Sion, but only her heart. No, doubtless, He never said, "Speak ye to the head of Jerusalem," but *Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem.* (Is. xl. 2.) Your heart is in good order, since your resolutions in it are living.

Abide in peace; you have the inheritance of the children of God. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* (St. Matt. v. 8.) He does not say that they do see Him, but that they shall see Him. Run, then, within the barriers, since they have set them up; you shall not fail to carry off the ring, and with greater certainty. Do not force yourself; do not make yourself anxious about yourself, since you speak to me as if you did. After the rain, comes fine weather; do not be so jealous about your mind. Well, on bad news a feeling of trouble does arise; it

is no great wonder that the mind of a poor little widow should be feeble and unhappy; but what would you have it be? A clear-sighted spirit, strong, constant, and self-dependent? Be content that your spirit is in harmony with your condition; the spirit of a widow, that is to say, poor and abject, in all abjection, except that of offending God. I lately saw a widow following the Blessed Sacrament, and where the others were carrying great tapers of white wax, she carried only a little candle, which perhaps she had made herself; the wind extinguished even hers; that did not bring her nearer the Blessed Sacrament, or remove her farther from it; she did not on that account miss entering the church as soon as the others. Do not be suspicious again; you are not the only person who has this cross. But even though you alone had some cross all to yourself, what of that? It would be so much the more valuable, and by its rarity it ought to be dearer. St. Peter would not have his cross like that of his Divine Master; he caused it to be inverted: he had his head on the ground and his heart in heaven as he was dying.

Use the light you have: *a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn.* (2 St. Pet. i. 19.) They have not yet opened to you the gate, but through the wicket you can see the court and the front-buildings of the palace of the heavenly King. Abide there—it is not unsuitable for widows to be a little retired. There are a crowd of good people waiting as well as you; it is reasonable that they should be preferred. However, have you not your little works to attend to meanwhile? Am I not too hard? At least I tell you the truth.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

What shall I say to you on the return of your miseries, except that, at the return of the enemy, it is necessary again to take up one's arms and one's courage to combat him more strongly than ever? But take good care not to give way to any sort of mistrust; for that heavenly goodness does not allow you to fall in this way in order to abandon you, but to humiliate you, and to make you cling the more firmly to the hand of His mercy.

You do exactly as I think you ought, in continuing your exercises in the midst of the drynesses and interior languors which have returned to you; for, since we will not serve God except for the love of Him, and since the service which we render Him in the midst of the affliction of dryness is more pleasing to Him than that which we perform in the midst of sweetness, we ought also on our side to acquiesce in it more, at least with our higher will; and although, according to our taste and self-love, sweetnesses are more pleasant to us, nevertheless drynesses remain according to God's taste and to His love, and are more profitable, as dry food is better for the dropsical than watery food, although they always are fondest of the latter. Your fits of coldness ought in nowise to astonish you, provided that you have a real desire of warmth, and that you do not cease, on account of cold, from continuing your exercises. Alas! tell me, was not the sweet Jesus born in the heart of cold? and wherefore shall He not also remain in the cold of the heart? I understand this cold of which, as I think, you speak to me, which does not consist in any relaxation of our good resolutions, but simply

in a certain lassitude and heaviness of spirit, which makes us walk with difficulty in the path in which we have placed ourselves, and from which we are resolved never to stray until we are safe in port.

However, live entirely unto God ; and for the love which He has borne towards you, support yourself in all your miseries. To be a good servant of God is not to be always in consolation, always in sweetness, always without aversion or repugnance to good ; for at this rate, neither St. Paula, nor St. Angela, nor St. Catherine of Sienna, served God well. To be a servant of God is to be charitable towards your neighbour—to have in the higher part of your soul an inviolable resolution to follow the will of God—to have a most humble humility and simplicity to trust yourself with God, and to rise again as often as you fall—to bear with yourself in your abjections, and tranquilly to endure the imperfections of others.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

When will it be that we, all dead before God, shall rise again to that new life in which we shall no more wish to do aught, but shall leave it to God to will all that we must do, and allow His living will to act upon ours, all dead? Courage! keep yourself well unto God; consecrate to Him all your labours; wait in patience for the return of sunshine. Ah! God has not cut off from us for ever the enjoyment of His sweetness. He has only withdrawn it for a little while, in order that we may live unto Him and for Him, and not for those consolations; in order that troubled hearts may find in us a compassionate succour and a kind and loving support; in order that, from a heart all lacerated, dead, and wearied, He may receive the sweet odour of a

holy holocaust. O Lord Jesus, by thy incomparable sadness, by that desolation like none other which burdened Thy divine heart in the Garden of Olives and on the Cross, and by the desolation of Thy dear Mother whilst she was deprived of Thy presence, be the joy and the strength of our heart, when our spirit is most specially fastened to Thy cross!

Do not trouble yourself, then, at all about your dryness and barrenness; on the contrary, console yourself in your higher spirit, and call to mind what our Lord said: *Blessed are the poor in spirit; and, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice.* (St. Matt. v. 3, 6.) What a happiness to serve God in the desert without manna, without water, and without other consolations than those we have from being under His guidance, and from suffering for Him!

After the winter of this coldness, the holy summer will arrive, and we shall be consoled. Alas! we are always ready to welcome sweetness, enjoyment, and delicious consolation; but, after all, the roughness of desolation is more fruitful: and although St. Peter loved the mountain of Thabor, and fled from that of Calvary, the latter is nevertheless more salutary than the former; and the blood which is sprinkled over the one is more desirable than the light which is diffused over the other. Our Lord already treats you like a beloved daughter. Better is it to eat bread without sugar than sugar without bread.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

You set your hand to the work, you tell me. O my God, how great a consolation is here for me! Do this continually, and set your hand a little to the work. Spin some portion daily, whether it be by day,

by the shining light of interior brightness, or by night, under the gleam of the lamp, in the midst of weaknesses and barrenness. Herein the wise man praises the valiant woman. *Her fingers*, he says, *have taken hold of the spindle.* (Prov. xxxi. 19.) How willingly would I give you some instruction on this word! Your distaff is the accumulated work of your desires. Spin some portion daily; draw your purposes out to fulfilment, and you will doubtless accomplish them. But take care not to be too hasty, for so you would entangle your thread, and disarrange your spindle.

Let us continually go forward; slowly as we may advance, we shall get over a great deal of ground. Your weaknesses do you much harm; for, say you, they hinder you from entering into yourself, and from drawing near to God. This is to speak wrongly, without doubt. God leaves you these for His glory and your great profit. He wishes that your misery should be the throne of His mercy, and your weaknesses the seat of His almighty power. Where did God make the divine strength which He placed in Samson reside, but in his hair, the feeblest part of the body? (Judges xvi.) Let us hear no more such words from a daughter who wishes to serve God according to His divine pleasure, and not according to sensible tastes and inclinations. *Although He should kill me*, said Job, *I will trust in Him.* (Job xiii. 15.) No, these weaknesses do not hinder you from entering into yourself, but rather from being pleased with yourself. We always wish this or that; and although we have our sweet Jesus in our heart, we are not content; and nevertheless it is all that we can desire. One thing alone is necessary for us, and that is to be near Him.

You tell me—you know it well—that at the birth

of our Saviour, the shepherds heard the angelical and divine chants of those celestial spirits. Scripture says so. It is not said, however, that our Lady and St. Joseph, who were nearest the Child, heard the voice of the angels, or saw those miraculous lights; on the contrary, instead of hearing the angels sing, they heard the Infant cry, and saw by some borrowed light the eyes of that divine Infant all covered with tears, and chilled with the rigour of the cold. Now, I ask you in good faith, would you not have chosen to be in the stable, dark as it was, but resounding with the cries of that divine Infant, than to be with the shepherds, swooning with gladness and joy at the sweetness of that celestial music, and the beauty of that admirable light?

Yes; *It is good for us*, said St. Peter, *to be here* (St. Matt. xvii. 4), to see the transfiguration; and the Blessed Virgin was not there, but only on the hill of Calvary, where she saw nothing but deaths, thorns, nails, weaknesses, marvellous darknesses, abandonments, and derelictions. Enough on this subject. I pray you, love God crucified in the midst of darkness; abide near Him. Say, "It is good for me to be here. Let us make here three tabernacles—one for our Lord, another for our Lady, and another for St. John." Three crosses only; and place yourself near that of the Son, or near that of our Lady, or near that of the disciple: you will be every where welcome with the other daughters who are standing all around.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### OF STRENGTHENING OUR GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

You ask me, what you can do to strengthen tho, roughly your good resolutions, and to make them succeed?

There is no better means than to put them in practice.

But you tell me that you remain always so feeble, that although you often make strong resolutions not to fall, yet you notwithstanding lose your footing, and fall headlong.

Shall I tell you why you remain always so feeble? It is because you will not abstain from food that is bad for you. It is as if a person who wanted to be free from indigestion asked a physician what he was to do, and the physician were to reply, Do not eat such and such food, because it causes crudity and sickness; but the patient were nevertheless to eat of it.

You do the same; you would wish, for example, to love correction well, and yet you choose at the same time to remain always attached to your own opinions. Oh, this cannot be: you will never be strong to endure correction, so long as you will eat of the food of self-esteem.

You would wish to keep your soul in a state of recollection, and yet you will not banish a crowd of useless reflections. This cannot be.

My God, you say once more, I would willingly keep firmly and invariably to my resolutions, but I would like it not to cost me so much trouble to put them into practice; that is to say, you want to find the work all done to your hands: but that cannot be in this life, where we shall always have to labour. The feast of Purification has no octave; we must purify ourselves every day, as long as we are in this world.

It is necessary for us to have two equal resolutions: one, to see ill weeds grow in our garden; the other, to have the courage to see them torn up, and to tear them up ourselves: for our self-love will not die so long as we live, and this it is that causes these evil plants to grow.

For the rest, it is not being feeble to fall sometimes into venial sins, provided that we forthwith raise ourselves up from them, by a return of our soul to God, sweetly humbling ourselves. We ought not to imagine that we can live without always committing some venial sins or other, for only our Lady had the privilege of being free from them. Certainly, though they may check us a little, they do not turn us aside out of the way; one single loving look of God effaces them.

Lastly, we must be convinced that we ought never to cease from making good resolutions, although we may see clearly that, according to our ordinary state, we shall not practise them, nay, though we saw that it is impossible for us to practise them when the occasion for them shall present itself; and then we ought to make them with more firmness than if we felt that we had sufficient courage to succeed in our enterprise, saying to our Lord: "It is true that I shall not have the strength to do such and such a thing of myself; but I am rejoiced at it, inasmuch as it will be Thy strength that will do it in me;" and resting on this support, to go to the battle courageously, and never to doubt but that we shall win the victory.

St. Paula, who was so generous in disentangling herself from the world, quitting the city of Rome and so much grandeur, and who could not be shaken by the maternal affection which she felt towards her children, so resolved was her heart to quit every thing for the sake of God; she, after achieving all these marvels, allowed herself to yield to the temptation of her own judgment, which persuaded her that she ought not to submit to the counsel of several holy persons, who wished her to retrench somewhat of her ordinary austerities: in which St. Jerome declares that she was reprehensible.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## OF PRAYERS WHICH MAY BE MADE IN SICKNESS.

As to meditation, the physicians are right; so long as you remain infirm, you must abstain from it; and to make up for this deficiency, you must redouble your ejaculatory prayers, and apply yourself wholly to God, by an acquiescence in His good pleasure, who in nowise separates you from Himself in giving you this hindrance to meditation; but it is for you to unite yourself more solidly to Him by the exercise of holy and tranquil resignation.

What matters it to us that we are in God's service in this way or in that? Indeed, since we seek not for aught but Him, and since we find Him not less in mortification than in prayer, especially when He touches us with sickness, the one ought to be as good to us as the other; besides, short ejaculations and dartings forth of our spirit are true and continual prayers, and the suffering of evils is the most worthy offering which we could make to Him who has saved us by suffering. Make them read you some good book from time to time, for that too is an assistance.

Do not distress yourself that you are not able to serve God according to your taste; for, by accommodating your self-will to your discomforts, you serve Him according to His taste, which is better than yours. May He be blessed and glorified for ever!

When God shall have restored your health to you, it will be proper to resume your meditation, at least for half an hour in the morning, and for a quarter of an hour in the evening, before supper; for, since our Lord has once given you the taste of this celestial honey, it will be a great reproach to you if you lose

the taste of it. You must therefore take courage, and not allow conversation to deprive you of so rare an advantage as that of speaking heart to heart with your God.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### OF PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENTS.

The sacraments are channels by which God descends to us, as by meditation we ascend to Him. The effects of the sacraments are different, although they all have but one end, which is to unite us to God.

We speak here only of that of penance and of the Eucharist. It is very necessary to know why it is, that, receiving so frequently these two sacraments, we do not also receive the graces which they are wont to communicate to souls which are well prepared, since the graces are joined to the sacraments. I will tell you why it is, in two words: it is for want of due and suitable preparation.

The first preparation is purity of intention, a thing absolutely necessary, not only in receiving the sacraments, but moreover in every thing that we do. Now, the intention is pure if we receive the sacraments, or do any thing else, whatever it may be, in the single view of uniting ourselves to God, and of being more pleasing to Him.

You will know this if, when you wish for communion, you are not permitted to have it; or, again, if after communion you do not feel consolation, and notwithstanding do not fail to remain in peace: for if you become disquieted because you have not been allowed to communicate, or because you do not feel consolation, who can help seeing that your intention was not pure, and that you were seeking for some-

thing else than to unite yourself to God, since your union with God ought to be made under the holy virtue of obedience?

And just in the same way, if you desire perfection with a desire full of restlessness, who can help seeing that it is self-love, which is unwilling that people should see imperfection in you? If it were possible that we could be as pleasing to God, being imperfect, as we should be, being perfect, we ought to desire to be without perfection, in order to nourish in us by this means most holy humility.

The second preparation is attention. Certainly, we ought to go to the sacraments with much attention, as well to the greatness of the action, as to that which each sacrament demands of us. For example, in going to confession, we ought to carry thither a heart lovingly sorrowful, and to holy communion a heart ardently loving. I do not say, in requiring this great attention, that we must have no distractions at all, for that is not in our power; but I say that we ought to have a most particular care not voluntarily to pause upon them.

The third preparation is humility, which is a virtue highly necessary in order to receive abundantly the graces which are transmitted through the channels of the sacraments; because waters flow more swiftly and more strongly when the channels are placed on low and sloping ground.

But besides these preparations, I must tell you that the chief of them all is the total abandonment of ourselves to the mercy of God, submitting without any reserve our will and all our affections to His dominion: I say without reserve, because our misery is so great, that we evermore reserve something to ourselves, which is what we ought not to do; for our Lord, wishing to give Himself entirely to us, wishes

that we in return should give ourselves entirely to Him, in order that the union of our soul with His Divine Majesty may be more perfect, and that we may be able to say with truth, after that great example of perfection among Christians: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii. 20.)

The second part of this preparation consists in emptying our heart of every thing, in order that our Lord may fill it all Himself. Certainly, the cause why we do not receive the grace of sanctification (since one single communion well made is able and sufficient to render us holy and perfect) only arises from our not leaving our Lord to reign in us, as His goodness desires. This Beloved of our souls comes unto us, and He finds our hearts all full of desires and affections; and this is not what He seeks; for He wishes to find them empty, to make Himself the master of them and to govern them; and to shew how much He desires this, He tells His holy spouse to place Him as a seal upon her heart, that nothing may enter there, except by His permission and His good pleasure.

Now, I am well aware that the inmost depth of our heart is void; were it otherwise, it would be too great an unfaithfulness; I mean to say, that we have not only rejected and detested mortal sin, but also every kind of evil affections. But alas! all the nooks and corners of our hearts are full of a thousand things unworthy to appear in the presence of this sovereign King, which bind, as it would seem, His hands, and hinder Him from distributing those goods and graces which His goodness would desire to bestow upon us, if He found us prepared.

Let us, then, do on our parts what is in our power to prepare ourselves well for receiving that bread which is supersubstantial, wholly abandoning ourselves to the divine Providence, not only in what concerns tem-

poral goods, but even spiritual; spreading out in the presence of the divine Goodness all our affections, desires, and inclinations, to be entirely submitted to it; and let us be assured that our Lord, on His part, will accomplish the promise which He has made us to transform ourselves into Himself, by raising our lowliness so as to be united to His greatness.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### OF THE FRUIT WHICH WE OUGHT TO DRAW FROM THE SACRAMENTS.

You will know whether you are receiving the sacraments profitably, by the virtues which belong to them; for instance, if you draw from confession the love of your own abjection and humility: for these are the virtues which belong to it, and it is always by the measure of humility that we recognise our own progress. Do you not see that it is written that *he that shall humble himself shall be exalted?* (St. Matt. xxiii. 12.) To be exalted, is to make progress.

If you become by means of the most holy communion very gentle, since that virtue is proper to this sacrament, which is all gentle, all sweet, all honey, you will derive that fruit which belongs to it, and thus will be making progress. But if, on the contrary, you do not become at all more humble or more gentle, you deserve that the bread should be taken from you, since you do not labour to make yourself worthy of it.

I would have you simply to go to communion when you wish it, asking permission of the superioress; resigning yourself humbly to accept a denial, if you are denied it, and if it be granted you, to go to communion with love. Although there may be some mortification in asking permission, you must nevertheless not omit to do so; for the daughters who enter

into religion, only enter into it to mortify themselves; and the cross which they carry ought to remind them of that.

But if the inspiration suggests itself to a religious, not to communicate so often as the rest, by reason of the knowledge which she has of her own unworthiness, she can ask permission of the superioress, and await her judgment with great sweetness and humility.

You ought not to be so tender about wishing to confess so many trifling imperfections, since we are even under no obligation to confess venial sins, unless we choose; but when we do confess them, we ought to have the resolute will to amend ourselves of them, otherwise it would be an abuse to confess them.

Nor ought you to torment yourself when you cannot recollect your faults to confess them; for it is not to be believed that a soul which often examines itself would not observe, in such a way as to remember them, any faults of importance. As for all these little and trifling defects, you can speak of them to our Lord as often as you perceive them: a humiliation of spirit and a sigh suffices for that.

You ask how you can make your act of contrition in a small space of time? I tell you that you require hardly any time to make it well, since nothing more is needed than to prostrate oneself before God in the spirit of humility and of repentance for having offended.

Lastly, it is necessary that all the prayers and supplications which you make to God should be made not for yourself only, but also for others; and that you should always take care to say "we," as our Lord taught us in the Lord's prayer, where there is neither "my," nor "mine," nor "I." This means that you should have the intention of praying God to give the virtue or the grace which you ask of Him for

yourself to all those who have the same need of it ; and that it should always be with the object of uniting ourselves yet more closely to Him : for we ought not to ask for or desire any thing else, either for ourselves or for our neighbour, since that is the end for which the sacraments were instituted.

We ought, then, to correspond with this intention of our Lord, receiving them for this same end. And we ought not to think that in communicating or in praying for others, we lose any thing thereby, unless when we offer to God this communion or this prayer for the satisfaction of their sins, for then we would not make satisfaction for our own ; but nevertheless, the merit of the communion or the prayer would remain our own : for we cannot merit grace for each other ; none but our Lord could do that. We are able to obtain by prayers graces for others, but to merit them is what we cannot do. The prayer which we have made for them augments our merit, as well for the recompense of grace in this life, as of glory in the other.

But if a person did not, in doing any thing, fix his intention on doing it in satisfaction for his sins, the mere intention he might have of doing all he does for the pure love of God would suffice to make satisfaction for them ; since it is a certain maxim, that whoever should make an excellent act of charity, or an act of perfect contrition, would fully make satisfaction for his sins.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### OF DISPOSITIONS FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

I would not wish you to bring your daughter so frequently to communion as that she should not be well aware of what this frequent communion really is.

There is a difference between distinguishing communion from other food, and distinguishing frequent communion from rare communion. If this little soul sees clearly that, in order to frequent holy communion, one ought to have great purity and fervour; and if she aspires to it, and is diligent in adorning herself with its virtues,—then I am quite of opinion that she ought to be made to approach it frequently, that is to say, once a fortnight.

But if she is strongly disposed to communion merely, and not to the mortification of her little imperfections of faith, I think it would be sufficient to make her go to confession once a week, and to communion once a month. It is true that the communion is the great means of arriving at perfection; but we ought to receive it with the desire and the pains to remove from our heart all that is displeasing to Him whom we would lodge there.

To put yourself into such a state as to profit well by your communions, persevere in conquering those little daily contradictions which you feel; make the great proportion of your aspirations for this end; know that at present God only requires this of you. Do not amuse yourself, then, by doing any thing else. Do not sow your desires in the garden of another; cultivate only your own, and do it well. Do not desire not to be what you are, but be content to be what you are. Occupy your thoughts in perfecting yourself therein, and in carrying the crosses, little or great, which you find there; and believe me, here is the great word, and the word least understood in the spiritual life: every one loves according to his own taste; few love according to their duty and the taste of our Lord. What is the use of building castles in the air, when we must live upon the earth? It is my old lesson, and you understand it well. Tell me if you practise

it well. By practising it well, you will not fail to find in your communions greater enjoyment and greater fruit.

You have done well in obeying your confessor, whether he has deprived you of the consolation of frequent communion in order to try you, or whether he has done it because you have not been at sufficient pains to correct your impatience : as for me, I think he has done it for both these reasons, and that you ought to persevere in this penance as long as he orders it, since you have every reason to think that he does nothing without due consideration ; and if you obey humbly, one communion will be more really useful to you than two or three made otherwise. For nothing makes our food so beneficial to us as taking it with appetite and after exercise. But the delay will give you greater appetite ; and the exercise of mortifying your impatience will give a new vigour to your spiritual constitution. Humble yourself sweetly, however, and often make the act of the love of your own abjection. Abide for a little time in the position of the woman of Canaan. (St. Matt. xv. 27.) Yea, Lord, I am not worthy to eat the bread of the children. I am truly a whelp, who look angry and bite my neighbour without reason, by my words of impatience ; but if the whelps eat not of the entire bread, at least they eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master. Thus, O my sweet Master, I ask of Thee, if not Thy holy body, at least the benedictions which it diffuses over those who approach it with love. This is the feeling which you may have on those days on which you were accustomed to communicate, but on which you now do not.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## OF THE MOST HOLY COMMUNION.

You tell me that you feel more than ordinarily famished for the most holy communion. There are two sorts of hunger: one which is caused by good digestion, and another which is caused by the derangement of the stomach. Humble yourself profoundly, and warm yourself with the holy love of Jesus Christ crucified, that you may be able spiritually well to digest this heavenly viand; and since whoso complains of famine asks sufficiently for bread, I say to you, Yes; communicate this Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays, and the day of our Lady, besides Sundays.

But what do you understand by spiritual digestions of Jesus Christ? Those who digest material food well, feel a new vigour through their whole body, by the general distribution of the food which is made throughout it. So those who digest well spiritually, feel that Jesus Christ, who is their food, diffuses and communicates Himself to all the parts of their soul and body.

They have Jesus Christ in their brain, in their heart, lungs, eyes, hands, tongue, ears, feet. But this Saviour, what doth He, thus circulating every where? He straightens all, He purifies all, He mortifies all, He vivifies all; He loves in the heart, He understands in the brain, He breathes in the lungs, He sees in the eyes, He hears in the ears, and so of the rest. He doth all in all; and then we live, yet not we, but Jesus Christ liveth in us. Oh, when shall this be, my God, when shall this be? but herein I shew to you what we ought to aim at, although we must be contented with attaining thereto little by little.

Let us keep ourselves humble, and let us communicate boldly. Little by little our interior stomach will accustom itself to this viand, and will learn to digest it well. It is a great point to eat only one kind of food; when it is good, the stomach does its duty far better. Let us desire only the Saviour, and I hope that our food will be digested well.

Let us boldly communicate in peace, with all humility, in order to correspond to this Spouse, who, to unite Himself unto us, has annihilated and sweetly abased Himself, so far as to make Himself the food and nourishment of us—of us, who are the food and nourishment of worms. Oh! He who communicates according to the spirit of the Spouse, annihilates himself, and says to our Lord: Receive me, feed on me, annihilate me, and convert me into Thyself.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### OF THE SPIRIT IN WHICH ONE OUGHT TO READ SPIRITUAL BOOKS.

The superioress gives to one of the sisters a book which treats extremely well of the virtues; but because she does not like it, she makes no profit by her reading, from the negligence of spirit with which she reads. Now I say that it is an imperfection to wish to choose or to desire any other book than the one given to us; and it is a sign that we read rather to satisfy our curiosity than for the sake of profiting.

If we read for the sake of profiting, and not to please ourselves, we should be as satisfied with one book as with another; at least, we should accept with a good heart whatever was given to us. I say more: we should take pleasure in only reading one single book, provided that it was good and that it spoke of God; and though there was nothing in it

but only this name of God, we should be content, because we should always find plenty of work to do after having read and re-read it several times.

To wish to read in order to satisfy curiosity, is a mark that there is still somewhat of levity in our mind, and that it does not sufficiently apply itself to do the good which it has learned in those little books on the practice of the virtues; for they speak extremely well of humility and mortification, which, nevertheless, we do not practise, when we do not accept them with a good heart.

Now to say, "Because I do not like it, I shall derive no profit from it," is not good reasoning. No more is it to say, "I have it already by heart, I cannot take any pleasure in reading it all over." All this is childish talk. Do they give you a book which you already know by heart? Bless God for it, because you will understand it the more easily. Do they give you one which you have already read several times? Be well assured that it is God who so wills it, in order that you may apply yourself rather to do than to learn what is taught in it; and that His goodness gives it you for the second and third time, because you have not profited by the first reading.

But the evil of all this is, that we are always seeking our own satisfaction, and not our greater perfection.

If by chance, regard being had to our infirmity, the superioress allows us to choose which book we please, then we can choose one with simplicity. But apart from this, we ought always to remain humbly subject to whatever the superioress orders, whether it be agreeable to us or not, without ever shewing the feelings we may have contrary to this submission.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

OF THE IMPERFECTIONS WHICH ARE FOUND IN RELIGIOUS PERSONS.

There is no doubt we are never so perfect as not always to commit some imperfections, according to the occasions in which we are exercised.

It is no great thing to see a sister very gentle, and committing very few faults, when she has nothing to vex or to try her.

When people say to me, Look at such a sister, in whom one sees no imperfection, I immediately ask, Does she hold any office? If they say not, then I make no great account of her perfection; for there is a great difference between the virtue of this sister and that of another who shall be well tried, whether interiorly by temptations, or exteriorly by contradictions; for the virtue of strength and the strength of virtue are not ordinarily acquired so perfectly in time of peace, as they are whilst we are not tried by the temptation of its contrary.

Those who are very gentle, but who meet with no contradiction, and who have not acquired this virtue sword in hand, are in truth very exemplary, and give great edification; but if you come to the proof, you will find them immediately disturbed, and they will shew that their sweetness was not a strong and solid virtue, but an imaginary rather than a real one.

There is a great deal of difference between the absence of a vice and the presence of the opposite virtue. Many appear to be highly endowed with virtue, who, nevertheless, are not so, because they have not acquired it by labour.

It very often happens that our passions sleep and remain dormant; and if, during that time, we do not lay up provision of strength with which to combat

and resist them when they wake up, we shall be vanquished in the combat.

We ought always to remain humble, and not to suppose that we have the virtues merely because we do not commit, or at least do not know that we commit, the faults opposed to them.

Certainly, there are many persons who greatly deceive themselves, in imagining that those who make profession of perfection must needs never fall into imperfections; and particularly persons in the religious life, because they fancy that it is only required to enter into religion to be perfect, which is not the case: for the religious orders are not instituted to gather together perfect persons, but persons who have the courage to aim at perfection.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### EXERCISES OF PIETY FOR PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE WORLD.

Keep always fixed in the midst of your heart the resolutions which God has given you of being all His; for if you preserve them in this mortal life, they will preserve you in the eternal life.

And in order not only to preserve them, but to make them happily increase, you require no other counsels than those which are given to Philothea in the book of the Introduction to a Devout Life, which is in your hands; but nevertheless, to gratify you, I will gladly indicate in a few words what I wish you principally to do.

1. Go to confession once a fortnight, in order to receive the divine sacrament of the holy communion; and never go either to the one or to the other of these heavenly mysteries, without a new and very deep resolution of amending yourself more and more from your imperfections, and of living with a con-

tinually increasing purity and perfection of heart. Now I do not say, that if you find you have a devotion to communicate every week, you may not do so, especially if you observe that by this sacred mystery your troublesome inclinations and the imperfections of your life go on diminishing; but I have mentioned once a fortnight, in order that you might not defer it longer than that.

2. Make your spiritual exercises brief and fervent, in order that you may feel no difficulty in betaking yourself to them from apprehension of their length, and that little by little you may accustom yourself to these acts of piety.

3. Learn to use frequently ejaculatory prayers, and elevations of the heart unto God.

4. Take pains to be gentle and affable to every one, but above all, those in the house.

5. Let the alms distributed in your house be distributed by your own hand, when you are able; for it is a great increase in virtue to do the work with your own hands, when that is possible.

6. Visit the sick in your parish very readily; for that is one of the works to which our Lord will have an eye at His judgment-day.

7. Read every day a page or two of some spiritual book, to keep yourself in taste and devotion, and on festivals a little more.

8. During the day, and in the midst of business, as often as you can, examine whether your affection is not engaged too far; whether it is not out of order; and whether you are holding by one hand to our Lord. If you find yourself embarrassed beyond measure, tranquillise your soul, and bring it back to repose. Imagine to yourself how our Lady sweetly busied herself with one hand, whilst she held our Lord with the other, or on the other arm, in His in-

fancy; for it was with a great reverence. In your time of peace multiply acts of sweetness; for by this means you will accustom your heart to meekness.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHAT A PERSON ENGAGED IN THE WORLD OUGHT TO DO IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT PERFECTION.

You have a great desire of Christian perfection. It is the most generous desire which you can possibly have: nourish it, and make it increase day by day. The means for arriving at perfection are different, according to the diversity of vocations; for religious, widows, and married people, ought all to seek this perfection, but not by the same means; for in your case, who are married, the means are to unite yourself well with God and with your neighbour.

The means for uniting yourself with God ought to be principally the use of the sacraments and prayer.

As to the use of the sacraments, you ought to allow no month to pass without communicating; and after some time, according to the progress you shall have made in the service of God, and according to the advice of your spiritual fathers, you can communicate oftener: but as for confession, I strongly advise you to frequent it still more often.

As to prayer, you ought to use it assiduously, particularly meditation. Spend, then, a short time in meditation every day, and take good care not to make it either after dinner or after supper, for that would be injurious to your health. I pray of you by no means to afflict yourself if sometimes, and even very often, you do not feel consolation in it, but go on sweetly, and with humility and patience, without distressing your mind about that. Avail yourself of the

book when you see that your mind is fatigued ; that is to say, read a little, and then meditate, and then read a little again, and then meditate until the end of your hour. St. Teresa made use of a book in this way from the commencement, and says that she found very great advantage from it ; and since we are speaking in confidence, I will add, that I have made trial of it thus, and that I found much advantage from it. Consider it as a rule, that the grace of meditation cannot be gained by any effort of the mind ; but it requires a sweet and very affectionate perseverance, full of humility.

Besides this, frequently address ejaculatory prayers to our Lord, and do so at all hours you can, and in all companies, regarding always God in your heart, and your heart in God. I would wish that no day passed without your giving half-an-hour or an hour to the reading of some spiritual book.

As for the means which serve for uniting oneself well with one's neighbour, there are a great number of them ; but I will only mention a few. We ought to consider our neighbour in God, who wills us to love and cherish him. It is the advice of St. Paul, who orders servants to serve God in their masters, and their masters in God. (Eph. vi. 5.) We ought to exercise ourselves in this love of our neighbour by cherishing him exteriorly ; and although it may seem at first to be against our will, we must not give it up on that account ; for this repugnance of the inferior part will be at last overcome by the habit and good inclination which will be produced by the repetition of the acts. We ought to bring our prayers and meditations to bear upon this ; for after having asked for the love of God, we ought always to ask for the love of our neighbour, and particularly of those for whom our will has no inclination.

I advise you to take the trouble now and then of visiting the hospitals ; consoling the sick, considering their infirmities, softening your heart by beholding them, and praying for them, whilst you render them some assistance. But in all this take diligent heed that no one suffers through you, by your remaining in church too long, and abandoning the care of your household overmuch ; or, as sometimes happens, by allowing yourself to criticise the actions of others, or to be disdainful of conversations where the rules of devotion are not so exactly observed ; for in all this charity must govern and enlighten us, to make us condescend to the wills of our neighbour in whatever is not contrary to the commandments of God.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

##### OF THE COMBAT OF THE INWARD MAN WITH THE OUTWARD.

You say well that you have two selves within you. One which is somewhat tender, and is ready to fret if it is but touched. That self is the daughter of Eve, and consequently of an ill humour. The other self has a very good will to be all for God ; and in order to be all for God, to be all simply humble, and humbly sweet towards all the world. This self is the daughter of the glorious Virgin Mary, and is of a good temperament.

And the two daughters of these different mothers fight with each other ; and the worthless one is sometimes so bad, that the good one has much trouble to defend herself against her ; and then it seems as if she has been beaten, and as if the bad one was the braver. But indeed not : this bad daughter is not braver than you, but she is more perverse, more cross-grained and self-opinionated ; and when you go and weep she is well pleased, because it is always so

much time lost, and she is contented with making you lose time, since she cannot make you lose eternity.

Take my advice; rouse your courage strongly, arm yourself with the patience that we ought to have for ourselves. Often awaken your heart, that it may be a little on its guard, so as not to allow itself to be surprised. Be a little attentive as to this enemy. Wherever you set your foot, think of it, if you would not be surprised; for this bad daughter goes every where with you; and if you are off your guard, she will think of some stratagem against you.

But when it happens that she attacks you with a start, even though she makes you stumble a little and sprain yourself slightly, do not distress yourself, but call upon our Lord and our Lady. They will stretch towards you the holy hand of their succour; and if they leave you some time in trouble, it will be to make you call on them again, and cry more loudly for help.

Do not be in the least ashamed of all this, any more than St. Paul, who confesses (Rom. vii. 22, 23) that there were in him two selves, one of which was rebellious to God, and the other obedient. Be simple; do not distress yourself; humble yourself without discouragement, and encourage yourself without presumption. Be well assured that our Lord, having placed you amidst the embarrassments of a household, knows well, and sees well, that you are embarrassed with it; but He does not fail to cherish you, provided that you are humble and filled with confidence; and if you do this, all will turn to good for you.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## WHAT WE OUGHT TO THINK OF THE WORLD.

You ask me whether those who desire to live with some perfection should see so much of the world. Perfection does not consist in not seeing the world, but rather in not relishing it. The danger consists in what the sight of the world brings to us; for whoever sees it runs some risk of loving it: but whoso is very resolute and determined, the sight of it does not hurt him. In one word, the perfection of charity is the perfection of life; for the life of our soul is charity.

The first Christians were in the world bodily, but not in heart, and nevertheless did not fail of being very perfect.

I would not wish there should be any affectation in us. Sincerity and simplicity are our proper virtues. If the world despises us, let us rejoice; for it has reason to do so, since we know very well that we are worthy to be despised: if it values us, let us despise its value and its judgment, for it is blind. Trouble yourself very little with what the world thinks; despise its respect and its contempt, and leave it to say what it will, good or bad.

I do not at all approve of one's committing any fault for the sake of giving a bad opinion of oneself. It is always doing wrong, and making one's neighbour do wrong. On the contrary, I would wish that, keeping our eyes upon our Lord, we should do our actions without regarding what the world thinks of them, or what face it puts on them.

One may avoid giving a good opinion of oneself, but not seek to give a bad one, above all by faults intentionally committed. In a word, despise almost

equally the good or bad opinion which the world may have of you, and do not at all trouble yourself about it. To say that you are not what the world thinks you, when it thinks well of you, that is good; for the world is a charlatan: it always says too much, whether for good or for ill. You will often be amidst the children of this world, who, according to their custom, will mock at whatever they see or suppose to be in you contrary to their miserable inclinations.

Do not amuse yourself by disputing with them; do not shew any sort of sadness at their attacks; but with joy laugh at their laughter, contemn their contempt, make sport of their advice, modestly jeer at their jeerings, and, without paying any attention to all that, go on cheerfully in the service of God; and, at the time of prayer, recommend these poor souls to the Divine mercy. They deserve compassion for finding their recreation, and what they call their innocent conversation, in laughing and joking at subjects worthy of respect and reverence.

Every thing passes away. After the few days of this mortal life that remain to us, the infinite eternity will come. Of little consequence is it that we have advantages or disadvantages here, provided that for all eternity we are blessed. Let this holy eternity which awaits us be your consolation, and to be a Christian, a child of Jesus Christ, regenerated in His blood: for in this alone lies our glory, that this Divine Saviour has died for us.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### OF THE DEFECTS INTO WHICH WE FALL IN SPITE OF OUR DESIRES AFTER PERFECTION.

You complain that many imperfections and many defects trouble your life, contrary to the desire which you have of perfection and of the purity of the love

of our God. I reply to you, that it is not possible for us entirely to get rid of ourselves, so long as we are here below. We must needs carry ourselves about with us, until God carries us into heaven; and whilst we are carrying ourselves, we carry what is nothing worth.

We must, therefore, have patience, and not think that we can cure ourselves in one day of such a number of bad habits as we have contracted, in consequence of the little care we have taken of our spiritual health. There are those whom God has cured of them thoroughly all at one stroke, without leaving them any trace of their former malady; as He did in the case of St. Mary Magdalene, who in one instant was changed from a sink of corruption into a clear fountain of perfection, and was never troubled from that moment.

But on the other hand, the same God left in many of His dear disciples many marks of their evil inclinations some time after their conversion, and all for their greater profit: for instance, the blessed St. Peter, who, after his first vocation, fell several times into imperfections, and on one occasion all at once fell miserably.

Solomon says, that a bondwoman who all at once becomes mistress is likely to be very insolent. (Prov. xxx. 23.) There would be great danger lest a soul which has for a long time served its own passions and affections, should become haughty and vain, if in a moment it obtained a complete mastery over itself. It is necessary for us, little by little and step by step, to acquire this dominion, in the conquest of which saints have spent dozens of years.

You must, if you please, have patience with every body, but first of all, with yourself. Have a little patience, and you will see that every thing will turn out to admiration; for this dear and sweet Saviour

of our souls has not given us these ardent desires of serving Him without giving us the means of doing so. Doubtless He only retards the hour of the fulfilment of your holy desires to make you meet with a fulfilment more blessed; for do you see, this loving heart of our Redeemer measures and adjusts all the events of this world for the advantage of souls which, without reserve, wish to subject themselves to His Divine love. It will come, then, that good hour that you long for, in the day which this supreme Providence has named in the secret of His mercy; and then, with a thousand sorts of secret consolations, you will pour out your prayer before His divine goodness, who will turn your rocks into rivers of water, your serpent into a rod, and all the thorns of your heart into roses; yes, into sweet-smelling roses, which will refresh your spirit with their sweetness. For it is true that our faults, which, so long as they are in our souls, are thorns, by coming out therefrom through voluntary accusation, are changed into roses and perfumes; and as it is our wickedness that keeps them within our hearts, even so it is the goodness of the Holy Spirit that drives them forth.

Since you are strong enough to rise an hour before matins, and to make a meditation, I approve of it very highly. What a blessing is it to be thus all alone with God, without any person's knowing what passes between God and the heart, except God Himself and the heart that adores Him!

I approve of your exercising yourself in meditations on the life and passion of our Lord. In the evening, before supper, withdraw yourself for a quarter of an hour, or a short half-hour, either in the church or in your chamber, to rekindle the fire of the morning, either by resuming the same subject you have meditated on before, or taking for your subject Christ crucified; you will make a dozen fervent and loving

aspirations to your Beloved, always renewing your good resolutions of being all His.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PERFECTION IS NOT TO BE ACQUIRED IN A DAY.

Oh, no, I pray you, do not suppose that the work which you have undertaken can be so soon accomplished. Cherry-trees soon bear fruit, because the fruit lasts but a short time; but palm-trees, the princes among the trees, do not yield their dates till long after they have been planted. A moderate virtue can be acquired in a year; but the perfection to which we aim cannot be acquired under several years' time, at least in the ordinary way.

I hope that God will strengthen you more and more: and to the thought, or rather the temptation of sadness, or the fear that your present fervour and devotion will not last, reply once for all, that they who trust in God will never be confounded; and that for your soul and your spiritual affairs, as well as for your body and temporal affairs, you have cast your care on the Lord, and that He will take care of you. Let us serve God well to-day, and God will provide for to-morrow. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Have no disquietude for the morrow, for God who reigns to-day will reign to-morrow, and for all ages of ages. If His goodness had thought, or rather had known that you would have need of a more immediate help than I can give you at this distance, He would have given it you, and always will give it you, whenever it is necessary to make up for the deficiency of mine. Abide, then, in peace. God worketh from afar off as well as near, and *calleth those things that are not as those that are* (Rom. iv. 17) to the service of those who serve Him, without bringing them

near to each other; *absent in body, but present in spirit*, says the Apostle. (1 Cor. v. 3.)

Avoid that word “fool;” and remember the saying of our Lord (St. Matt. v. 22), *Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca* (a word that means nothing, but only signifies some indignation), *shall be in danger of the council*; that is to say, deliberation shall be held how he must be punished.

As for that sort of lamentation about your being miserable and unfortunate, you ought by all means to be on your guard against it; for besides such words being unbecoming in a servant of God, they proceed from a heart too depressed, and are not so much symptoms of impatience as of anger.

Keep your courage high and elevated in that eternal Providence, who has named thee by thy name, and has graven thee on His hands; and in this greatness of confidence and courage practise diligently humility and sweetness.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### WE SHOULD DAILY CONSIDER OURSELVES AS COMMENCING ANEW.

It appears to me that our faults universally proceed from no other cause but this: namely, that we forget the maxim of the Saints, who have warned us that we ought every day to consider that we are commencing anew our advancement in our perfection; and if we thought well upon this, we would not be surprised at finding misery in ourselves, and something to retrench. The work is never finished; it must always be recommenced, and recommenced with a good heart. *When the just shall have finished*, says the Holy Spirit, *then shall he begin*.

What we have done up to the present time is

good, but what we are about to begin shall be better; and when we shall have finished, we will recommence something else, which shall be still better; and then again something else, until we go out of this world, to commence another life, which shall have no end, because nothing better can happen to us.

Ought you, then, to be surprised if you find work to do in your soul, and ought you not to have courage always to go farther onwards, since you must never stand still? and ought you not to have courage to retrench, since the sword must reach even to *the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow?* (Heb. iv. 12.)

Observe well the precept of the Saints, who have all warned those who wish to become like them, to speak little or nothing of themselves and of the things which concern themselves.

Do not think, because you have changed your place of abode, that you are dispensed from the agreement which we made, that you should be sober in speaking of me as of yourself, unless the glory of the Master requires it: be a brief and exact observer of simplicity; self-love dazzles us. We ought to have very steady eyes not to be deceived in looking upon ourselves; for which reason the great Apostle cries out: *Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth.* (2 Cor. x. 18.) I prayed this morning with special fervour for our advancement in the holy love of God. "Ah," said I, "O Saviour of our heart, since we are daily at Thy table to eat, not only Thy bread, but Thyself, who art our living and supersubstantial bread; grant that daily we may well and perfectly digest this most perfect viand, and that we may live perpetually on that sacred sweetness, goodness, and love." Now God gives not so much

desire to our heart, without having a will to favour us with some corresponding effect.

Let us hope, then, that the Holy Spirit will some day satiate us with His holy love ; and meanwhile, let us hope continually, and let us make room for this holy fire by emptying our hearts of ourselves as much as is possible for us to do. How happy shall we be, if one day we change ourselves by this love, which, rendering us more one, will empty us utterly of all multiplicity, so as to have at heart only the sovereign unity of the Most Holy Trinity, to whom be blessing for ever, world without end ! Amen.

## CHAPTER XL.

### SEVERAL IMPORTANT ADMONITIONS FOR THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

As there are no goods in this world altogether unbalanced by evils, we ought so to adjust our will that it may either not aim at advantages, or if it does aim at them, may sweetly accommodate itself to the disadvantages which are undoubtedly attached to them. We have no wine without lees in this world. We ought, then, to ask the question : Is it better that there should be thorns in our garden, in order that we may have roses in it, or to have no roses that we may have no thorns ?

I pray of our sweet Saviour to diffuse His gentle and consoling sweetness over you, in order that you may repose holily, healthfully, tranquilly in Him ; and that He may keep a fatherly watch over you, since He is the most sovereign love of our heart. For God's sake I recommend to you our poor heart ; comfort it, fortify it, refresh it as well and as much as you are able, in order that it may serve God ; for it is on this account that we ought to treat it so. It is the lamb of the holocaust which we must offer to God ; we must

therefore keep it in good condition if possible. It is the bed of the Spouse, therefore we must sprinkle it with flowers. Console, then, this poor heart, and give it the greatest joy and peace that you can, in order that it may serve our Lord the better. Alas, what else have we to wish for but this? Live God! either nothing or God; for every thing which is not God is nothing, or is worse than nothing.

Lastly, let us be all at God's service without reserve, without division, without any exceptions whatever, and without any other aim but the honour of being all His. If we have a single fibre of affection in our heart which is not His and from Him, let us instantaneously pluck it out. Let us, then, abide in peace, and let us say with the great lover of the Cross: *From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me, for I have the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.* (Gal. vi. 17.) Yes, if we knew of one single atom of our heart which was not marked with the edge of the crucifix, we would not wish to keep it for a moment. Why should we disquiet ourselves? *O my soul, hope in God: why art thou sad, and why dost thou trouble me?* (Ps. xli. 6) since my God is my God, and my heart is a heart that is all His.

I cannot think how you can admit those unmeasured sadnesses into your heart, being, as you are, a daughter of God long since placed in the bosom of His mercy, and consecrated to His love. You ought yourself to console yourself, by despising all those melancholy suggestions and sadnesses, which the enemy brings upon you with the sole design of wearying and embarrassing you.

Do not allow your mind to think too much of its miseries; allow God to work; He will bring some good out of them. Do not make many reflections about self-love's mingling itself in your actions; these

sallies of self-love ought to be neglected. By disavowing them two or three times a day one is quit of them. One ought not to reject them by force of arms; it suffices simply to say "No."

Take good care to practise the humble sweetness which you owe to every one; for that is the virtue of virtues which our Lord has so much recommended to us: and if you happen to fail in this, do not be troubled; but with all confidence rise again, to walk anew in peace and sweetness as before.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### OF EXCITEMENT AND DISQUIETUDE IN THE PURSUIT OF VIRTUE.

I tell you in truth, as it is written in the Book of Kings (3 Kings xix. 11, 12), God is neither in the great and strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in those fires of your excitement and disquietude, but in that sweet and tranquil breathing of a gentle and almost imperceptible air. Allow yourself to be governed by God: think not so much of yourself.

If you wish me to command you, I will do so willingly; and I will command you in the first place, that, having a general and universal resolution of serving God in the best way that you are able, you do not amuse yourself with examining and subtly sifting out what is the best way of doing so. You know that God wills in general that we should serve Him by loving Him above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves: in particular, He wills you to keep a rule,—that is enough; you must do so in good faith, without refining and subtlety. Excitement and agitation of mind is of no use here. Desire indeed is good, but let it be without agitation; it is that excitement which I expressly forbid you, as it is the mother-imperfection of all imperfections.

Do not, then, examine so carefully whether you are in perfection or not: here are two reasons why you should not. One is, that it is to no purpose our examining ourselves in this way; since, were we the most perfect souls in the world, we ought never to know or be aware of it, but to esteem ourselves always as imperfect: our examen, then, ought never to be directed towards knowing whether we are imperfect, for of that we ought never to doubt. From thence it follows that we ought not to be surprised at finding ourselves imperfect, since we ought never to see ourselves otherwise in this life, nor be saddened on that account, for there is no remedy for it. I grant you most fully that we ought to humiliate ourselves because of it; for thereby we shall repair our defects and sweetly amend ourselves. Such is the exercise for which our imperfections are left to us, who are not excusable if we do not seek to amend them, or inexcusable if we fail of amending them completely; for it is not with imperfections as it is with sins.

The other reason is, that this examen, when it is made with anxiety and perplexity, is only a loss of time; and those who make it are like musicians who make themselves hoarse with practising a motett; for the mind wearies itself with an examen so great and so continual, and when the time of execution arrives, it can do no more. This is my first commandment.

The other commandment, which is a consequence from the first one: *If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome*, says the Saviour. (St. Matt. vi. 22.) Simplify your judgment; do not make so many reflections and replies, but go on simply and with confidence: for you there is nothing else in the world but God and yourself. You have nothing to do with aught else, except so far as God commands it, and in the way in which He commands it to you.

I pray of you, do not look so much hither and thither; keep your eyes fixed on God and yourself. You will never see God without goodness, or yourself without misery; and you will see His goodness propitious to your misery, the object of His goodness and of His mercy. Therefore do not look at any thing but this; I mean, with a fixed and settled gaze; and look at all the rest with a transient glance.

In the same way, avoid minutely examining what other people do, or what will become of them; but look on them with an eye simple, good, sweet, and affectionate. Do not require in them more perfection than in yourself, and do not be astonished at the diversity of imperfections; for imperfection is not greater imperfection merely because it is unusual. Behave like the bees,—suck the honey from all flowers and all herbs.

My third commandment is, that you should behave as little children do. So long as they feel that their mother is holding them by the leading-strings, they go on boldly, and run all about, and are not startled at the little falls which the feebleness of their limbs occasions. Thus, whilst you perceive that God is holding you by the good will and resolution which He has given you of serving Him, go on boldly, and do not be startled at the little shocks you will meet with; and you must not be troubled at them, provided that at certain intervals you cast yourself into His arms, and kiss Him with the kiss of charity.

Go on joyously, and with open heart, as much as you can; and if you do not always go on joyously, at least go on always courageously and confidently.

Do not avoid the society of the sisters, although it may not be to your taste; rather avoid your taste, when it is not according to the ways of the sisters.

Love the holy virtue of forbearance and holy complaisance; *and so*, says St. Paul (Gal. vi. 2), *you shall fulfil the law of Christ.*

## CHAPTER XLII.

### HOW WE MAY KNOW WHETHER OUR FEELINGS COME FROM GOD OR FROM THE DEVIL.

Feelings and sweetnesses may come from the Friend or from the enemy of our souls; that is to say, from the evil one, or from Him who is All-holy. Now we may know from whence they come, by certain signs, amongst which are the following:

1. When we do not dwell upon them, but avail ourselves of them as though by way of recreation, thereafter to proceed with greater constancy, it is a good sign; for God sometimes gives them to us for this purpose. He condescends to our infirmity; He sees our spiritual taste is dull; He gives us a little sauce for our food, not in order that we may eat nothing but sauce, but that it may give us an appetite for solid meat. It is, then, a good sign when we do not dwell upon feelings; for the evil one, in giving feelings, wishes that we may dwell upon them, and that by eating sauce only, our spiritual stomach may be enfeebled and spoilt little by little.

2. Good feelings do not suggest to us any thought of pride; but on the contrary, if the evil spirit takes occasion from them to give us such thoughts, they strengthen us to reject them, in such wise, that the soul remains all humble and full of submission. On the contrary, a bad feeling, instead of making us think of our weakness, makes us think that it is given to us by way of recompense.

3. A good feeling, when passed, does not leave us weakened, but strengthened; nor afflicted, but con-

soled. A bad feeling, on the contrary, gives us some pleasure at its coming, and on departing, leaves us full of anguish.

4. A good feeling, at its departure, recommends us in its absence to caress, to serve, and to follow virtue, for our advancement, in which it was given to us; a bad feeling makes us believe that with it virtue has gone, and that we are unable to serve it.

Lastly, a good feeling does not wish us to love itself, but only Him who gives it; not that it does not give us reason to love it, but that is not what it seeks; a bad feeling, on the contrary, wishes itself to be loved by us above every thing.

By these four or five marks, you will be able to know from whence your feelings come, and coming from God, they ought not to be rejected; but acknowledging that you are still a poor little child, take the milk from the hands of your Father, who from the compassion He bears you, still exercises towards you the office of mother.

Receive them, then, considering yourself feeble as to your spiritual stomach, since the physician gives you wine, notwithstanding the fever of the imperfections which are in you. But if St. Paul advised wine to his disciple (1 Tim. v. 23) because of his bodily infirmities, I may well advise you spiritual wine for your spiritual infirmities; but on condition that you are always ready to give it up, if such were the good pleasure of God.

### CHAPTER XLIII.

#### WHEREBY TO RECOGNISE THE GOODNESS OF ONE'S RELIGIOUS VOCATION.

There are those who are truly called by God to religion, and who are not faithful in corresponding with the grace. There are others who are not so

truly called, and who, by their fidelity, rectify their vocation. Thus we see some who come thither from vexation and weariness, others from some misfortune which they have met with in the world, and others from defect of health or bodily beauty. And although these vocations would seem not to be good, we have seen some, who having thus come, have succeeded extremely well in the service of God: so incomprehensible are the ways of God, and His designs unsearchable, and nevertheless admirable in the variety of the means He uses to call His creatures to His service; and all these means ought to be honoured and revered.

How, then, amidst so great a variety of vocations, and from such different motives, shall one be able to discern the good from the bad, so as not to be deceived? This is a thing of great importance and very difficult; nevertheless, it is not so much so, that we are entirely destitute of means for discovering the goodness of a vocation. Now among several which I might mention, I will suggest one which is the best of all, and that is a firm and constant will to serve God in the manner and in the place to which one has been called by His divine majesty; and this is the best mark that one can have of having a good vocation.

But observe, that when I say a firm and constant will of serving God, I do not say that one does from the commencement all that one ought to do in one's vocation, with a firmness and constancy so great as to exempt one from all repugnance, difficulty, or disgusts, or even from committing faults, or that it is so firm as never to waver or vary in its enterprise.

Oh, no! that is not what I mean to say; for every one is subject to passions, changes, and vicissitudes; and a person will to-day love one thing, who to-mor-

row will love another: one day does not resemble another. It is not, then, by these different movements and feelings that we ought to judge of the firmness and constancy of the will; but rather, if amid this variety of diverse movements, the will remains firm, so as not to abandon the good which it has embraced; so that, to have a mark of good vocation, we do not need a sensible constancy, but a constancy which is in the superior part of the soul, and which is effective.

Therefore, to know whether one is called to religion, one need not wait for God to speak to our senses, or to send us an angel from heaven, or to impart revelations to us. Nor do we require an examination to be held by five or six doctors, to know whether the inspiration is good or bad, whether we ought to follow it or no; but we ought to correspond to it well, and to cultivate the first movement of grace, and then not to distress ourselves if disgusts and coldnesses arise: for if we always strive to keep our will very firm, in the determination of seeking the good which is shewn to us, God will not fail to make all turn out well to His glory.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### OF THE OBJECT AIMED AT IN ENTERING RELIGION.

The object a person ought to have in view in entering into religion is by far the most important, the most necessary, and the most useful question which can be treated of. Certainly, many daughters enter into it without knowing why. They come into a parlour; they see there religious with a serene aspect, of good mein, very modest, extremely contented. They say to themselves, "My God! how good it is to be here! Let us go there: the world does not smile upon us; we shall not find in it what we seek." Another will

say, "My God! how well they sing in that convent!" Others come thither to find in it peace and consolations, and all sorts of sweetnesses, saying to themselves, "My God! how happy religious are! They are away from the noise of fathers and mothers who do nothing but scold: one can do nothing to satisfy them; it is always to begin again. Our Lord promises to those who quit the world for His service many consolations; let us therefore enter religion."

Here are three sorts of objects which are nothing worth for entering into the House of God. It must of necessity be God who builds the city.

When an architect wishes to build a house, he does two things. First, he considers for whom the building is intended; for he proceeds differently according as it is meant for a private person or for a prince or for a king; he also, before he begins, sees whether he has sufficient means, that people may not mock him for having begun what he is not able to finish. Secondly, he pulls down the old building which is in the place where he wishes to build the new one.

We wish to make a great edifice, to establish within us the abiding-place of God. Consequently, let us consider very ripely whether we have courage and resolution enough to ruin and crucify ourselves, or rather to allow God Himself to ruin and crucify us, that He may make of us a living temple to His divine majesty.

I say, therefore, that our only aim ought to be to unite ourselves to God, as Jesus Christ united Himself to Him in dying on the Cross; for I am not here speaking of that general union which is made by baptism, in receiving the character of Christianity, and binding ourselves to keep its commandments and those of the Church, and to exercise ourselves in good works and the practice of the Christian virtues. But as for

yourselves, it is not so with you; for beyond that obligation which you have in common with all Christians, God, by an altogether special love, has chosen you to be His dear spouses.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### WHAT IT IS TO BE A RELIGIOUS.

To be a religious is to be fastened and doubly fastened to God by a continual mortification of self; and to live only for God, our heart, our eyes, our tongue, our hands, serving His divine majesty always and continually.

This is why you see that religion furnishes you with means entirely adapted to this purpose, which are meditation, spiritual reading, continual aspirations to our Lord, and retreats of the heart to repose oneself in God alone.

And because we cannot arrive at this state, except by a continual mortification of all our passions, inclinations, humours, and aversions, we are obliged to watch continually over ourselves, in order to make all this die. *Unless, as our Lord saith, the grain of wheat falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* (John xii. 24.)

This is why you who are aspiring to the habit, and you who are aspiring to the holy profession, consider well, and oftener than once, whether you have resolution enough to die to yourselves, and to live only to God. Weigh the whole matter well; for I declare to you, and do not at all wish to flatter you, that whoever wishes to live according to the senses, ought to remain in the world; and that it is only those who wish to live according to grace, who ought to enter into religion, which is nothing else than a

school of the denial and mortification of self; thus you see that it furnishes you with several instruments of mortification, as well interior as exterior.

But, my God! you will tell me, this is not what I sought. I thought that it was enough, in order to be a good religious, to have the desire of meditating well, of partaking in visions and revelations, of seeing angels, of being ravished in ecstasy, of loving much to read good books: but what! I was so virtuous in the world, as it seemed to me, so mortified, so humble, every body admired me; and was it not to be very humble to speak sweetly to one's friends on subjects of devotion, to talk over sermons at home, to treat those in the house kindly, especially when they did not contradict me?

Oh, for the world that was good; but religion would have one do works worthy of one's vocation, by dying to oneself in every thing, as well in that which is good, according to our taste, as in that which is bad and unprofitable. Do you think that those good religious of the desert, who arrived at so great a union with God, arrived at it by following their inclinations? No, assuredly, they mortified themselves in the most holy things: and although they had great enjoyment in singing divine canticles, in reading, praying, and other things, they did not do this to please themselves; far from it: on the contrary, they voluntarily deprived themselves of those pleasures, to give themselves up to labour, and to the most painful works.

It is very true that religious souls receive a thousand sweetnesses and enjoyments, in the midst of the mortifications and exercises of holy religion; for it is principally they to whom the Holy Ghost imparts these precious gifts. In order therefore to have them, it is necessary that they seek God only, and occupy themselves with nothing but the mortification of their

humours, passions, and inclinations ; for if they seek any thing else, they will never find the consolation at which they aim.

It is necessary to have an invincible courage never to be wearied out with ourselves, because there is always something to do or to retrench ; for we shall never be perfectly healed until we are in paradise. A sister will feel herself disposed to meditate, to say office, to be in retreat, and they will say to her : “ My sister, attend in the kitchen, or do something else.” This is bad news for a daughter who is very devout : these are hard words : you must die ; but they are followed by very sweet words : die to be united to God by that death. You know that no wise person puts new wine into old bottles ; in the same way, the wine of divine love cannot enter where the old Adam reigneth : it is absolutely necessary to destroy it.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### OF THE QUALITIES WHICH A NOVICE OUGHT TO HAVE IN ORDER TO BE ADMITTED TO PROFESSION.

The first condition is, that a novice whom they receive to profession should have a good heart ; that is, a heart disposed to live in an entire submission and obedience.

The second condition is, that she should have a good understanding. Now, when I say a good understanding, I do not mean to imply those brilliant talents, which are generally vain, and full of self-will and self-sufficiency, and which, when in the world, were but the workshops of vanity. This sort of spirits enter religion, not to humble themselves, but to conduct and govern every thing, and as if they wished to give lessons in philosophy and theology.

Now it is about these we ought to be very cau-

tious: I do not say that we ought not to receive them; but I do say that we ought to be very cautious about them; for in them, and by the grace of God, they may greatly change; and this will no doubt come to pass, if they avail themselves with fidelity of the remedies which are given them for their cure.

When, therefore, I speak of a good understanding, I mean to speak of such as are rightly made, and of right judgment; and further, of moderate understandings, neither too great nor too small; for such minds always do a great deal, and all the time without their knowing it.

They set themselves to act, and devote themselves to the solid virtues: they are tractable, and one has not much trouble in guiding them; for they easily comprehend how good a thing it is to allow themselves to be guided.

The third condition required is, for the novice to have laboured well during her year of noviciate, to have profited well by the remedies prescribed to her, to have been very faithful to the resolutions she adopted on entering the noviciate, to change her evil humours and inclinations; for the year of noviciate was given her for no other purpose.

But if it be manifest that she has persevered faithfully in her resolutions, and that her will remains firm and constant to go forward, and that she has applied herself to reform herself according to the rules and constitutions, and that this determination remains, so that she wishes continually to do better, it is a good sign, and you may vote for her, even though there may have been faults in her, even of some moment; for it ought not to be required that at the end of her noviciate she should be perfect.

Look at the College of Apostles, although they were truly called, and although they had laboured

much in the reformation of their manners, how many faults did they not commit, not only in the first year, but also in the second and third! I mean to say by this, that falls ought not to be the cause of your rejecting a daughter, when amidst all this she remains with a firm determination of correcting herself, and is willing to avail herself of the means afforded her for that object.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### HOW THE SPIRIT OF ONE'S VOCATION IS TO BE PRESERVED.

The only means of preserving the spirit of one's vocation, and of preventing it from being dissipated, is to keep it shut up in the observance of the rules. But you tell me that there are some so jealous of this spirit, that they would not even let it be known outside of the house. There is superfluity in this jealousy, which ought to be diminished; for to what end, I pray you, should you wish to conceal from your neighbour what may be profitable to him? I am not of this opinion, for I should wish that all the good which is in this house should be recognised and known by every body; and this is why I have always thought that it would be good to have its rules and constitutions printed, in order that several, by seeing them, might derive some advantage from them.

God grant that many persons might be found who would wish to practise them! We should soon see great changes in them, which would turn out to God's glory, and to the salvation of their souls.

Be extremely careful to preserve the spirit of your vocation, but not in such a way that this care shall hinder you from communicating it charitably and with simplicity to your neighbour, to each one according to his capacity; and do not suppose that it will be

dissipated by this communication ; for charity spoils nothing ; on the contrary, it brings every thing to perfection.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## OF DISGUST FOR ONE'S VOCATION.

The idea of quitting your state has all the true marks of temptation that one could possibly find. But God be praised that in this assault the citadel has not yet surrendered, nor, as I think, is ready to surrender.

O God ! take great heed against the wish to go out ; for there is no middle course between your going out and your being lost. For do you not see that you would only go out to live to yourself, of yourself, by yourself, and in yourself ; and that the more dangerously because it would be under pretext of union with God, who nevertheless wills not to have, and never will have union with those singular souls who quit their vocation, their vows, their congregation, from bitterness of heart, from chagrin, from vexation, and from disgust at the society, at obedience, at the rules, and at holy observance.

Oh, see you not St. Simeon Stylites, so ready to quit his column at the advice of the elders ? and you, you will not give up your abstinence at the advice of so many good people, who have no interest in making you give it up, except to make you quit and exempt of your self-love.

Sing from henceforth the canticle of love. Oh, how good and how pleasant it is for sisters to dwell together in unity ! (Ps. cxxxii. 1.) Treat your temptation roughly. Say to it : *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* (Deut. vi. 16.) *Go behind me, Satan, thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.* (St. Mark viii. 33 ; St. Luke iv. 8.)

I leave you to think. You genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament, as if with a feeling of disgust; and then the temptation ensues: what greater marks of temptation could one have? The force of inspirations is humble, sweet, tranquil, and holy; and how, then, could your inclination be an inspiration, when it is so fretful, so hard, and so morose?

Withdraw yourself from it. Treat this temptation as you would treat that of blasphemy, of treason, of heresy, of despair; do not discourse with it, do not capitulate, do not listen to it: cross it as much as you can by frequent renewals of your vows, by frequent submissions to your superioress. Often invoke your good angel, and I hope that you will find the peace and the sweetness of the love of your neighbour. Sing in the choir always with the greater perseverance, the more the temptation says to you: Be silent; imitating that holy blind man, of whom it is said in the Gospel (St. Mark x. 48), *Many rebuked him that he might hold his peace; but he cried a great deal the more, Son of David, have mercy on me.*

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### OF THE CONVERSATION OF RELIGIOUS PERSONS WITH SECULARS.

You ask me, whether, supposing it happened one day that a superioress had such an inclination to be complaisant to secular persons, under the notion of their profiting by it, as to leave that particular care which she ought to have of the sisters placed under her charge, or not to have time enough to attend to the affairs of the house, because of remaining too long in the parlour; would she not be obliged to re-trench this inclination, although her inclination was good?

I reply to this, that superioresses ought to be extremely affable to seculars, in order to be of use to them, and to bestow on them with a good heart a portion of their time; but how much, think you, ought this portion to be? The twelfth part, the other eleven remaining to be employed in the house, in the care of the family.

Bees go a good deal out of their hive; but this is only for the sake of necessity or profit, and they make but a short stay before they return; and above all, the queen-bee rarely goes out, except, for instance, she is making a swarm of bees, when she is all surrounded by her little people. Religion is a mystical hive, all full of spiritual bees, which are assembled to eat the honey of celestial virtues; and this is why the superioress, who is among them as it were the queen-bee, ought to be careful not to leave them, in order to teach them the way of acquiring the virtues and of preserving them.

Nevertheless, she ought not, on that account, to fail of conversing with secular persons, when necessity or charity requires it; but beyond this, the superioress ought to be brief with seculars, unless it be with persons of great dignity, whom she must not displease, or persons who only come seldom, or from a great distance; apart from these cases, she ought not to leave office and meditation, unless charity absolutely requires it.

As for the visits of persons who may be freely dispensed with, the portress ought to say that you are at meditation or office; would it please them to wait, or to call again. But if it happens that for some great cause you go to the parlour at those times, at least recover time afterwards to perform your meditation as fully as you can; for as for office, nobody doubts your being obliged to say that.

As for the sisters, they ought never to spend their time with seculars, under the notion of gaining souls for the house. Oh, certainly, there is no occasion for that; for if they keep themselves retired, to do well what belongs to their duty, they ought to entertain no doubt but that our Lord will provide sufficiently for that.

## CHAPTER L.

GOD ORDINARILY GIVES US AN INCLINATION FOR THE STATE  
TO WHICH HE CALLS US.

The advice which was so continually given to you to remain in the service of your father, in order to be in a position hereafter to consecrate yourself, body and soul, to our Lord, was based upon a great number of consolations, drawn from various circumstances of your condition; and for this reason, if your mind were in a state of full and entire indifference, I should without doubt have told you to follow that advice, as the most worthy and proper course that could be proposed to you; for such it would have been, without any doubt.

But since your mind is not at all in a state of indifference, but, on the contrary, altogether bent on choosing marriage, and since, although you have had recourse to God, you still find yourself drawn in that direction, it is not expedient for you to do violence to so strong an impression, by any sort of consideration; for all those circumstances, which otherwise would have been more than sufficient to make me come to the same conclusion as the person who advised you, have no weight whatever beside that strong and settled inclination which you feel. If this were slight, it would, in truth, be of little importance; but being strong and decided, it ought to be the basis of your resolution.

If, then, the husband proposed for you is otherwise suitable, a good man, and of a kind disposition, you may with prudence accept him. I say, if he is of a kind disposition, because your deficiency in personal appearance requires this; as it requires of you to balance that defect by great sweetness, sincere love, and a very resigned humility; and, in fine, it makes up generally for bodily defects, by true virtue and perfection of mind.

The state of marriage is a state which requires more virtue and constancy than any other. It is a perpetual exercise of mortification: it will be so for you perhaps more than it would be for another. You must therefore dispose yourself for it with a particular care, in order that, from this plant of thyme, you may, in spite of the bitterness of its juice, draw the honey of a holy life and conversation. May the sweet Jesus be for ever to you the honey which makes sweet your vocation: may He for ever live and reign in our hearts!

## CHAPTER LI.

### MISTRUST THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS LIFE, AND LABOUR FOR ETERNITY.

I perceive that you are well supplied with the goods of the present life. Take care that your heart does not remain attached to them. Solomon, the wisest of men, began his miserable fall by the pleasure he took in the greatness, the splendour, and the magnificent apparel which he had, although it was all in keeping with his rank.

Let us consider that what we have does not in reality make us any thing more than the rest of the world; and that all this is nothing before God and the angels.

Recollect to do the will of God well on occasions that present the most difficulty. It is doing little to please God in what pleases ourselves. Filial fidelity requires that we should be ready to please Him in what displeases ourselves; having always before our eyes what the great beloved Son said of Himself: *I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me* (St. John vi. 38); for are you not a Christian in order to do the will of Him who adopted you to be His child, and to receive His eternal inheritance?

For the rest, you are going away, and I too am going away, without any hope of seeing you again in this world. Let us earnestly pray God to grant us the grace of so living according to His good pleasure in this pilgrimage, that being arrived in our heavenly country, we may be able to rejoice that we saw each other here below, and that we talked of the mysteries of eternity. Herein alone can we rejoice that we knew each other in this life, that it was all for the glory of His Divine Majesty and our eternal salvation.

Keep that holy cheerfulness of heart, which nourishes the strength of the mind, and edifies one's neighbour. Go in peace, and God be for ever your protector. May He for ever hold you by His hand, and conduct you in the path of His holy will.

## CHAPTER LII.

### WE MEET WITH ALL SEASONS IN OUR SOULS.

My God! how well you do to deposit your desire of leaving this world in the hands of heavenly Providence, so that it may not uselessly occupy your mind! Let us pray to God, and let us supplicate His will to manifest itself: let us dispose our will to desire nothing but through His and for His; and let

us abide in peace, without excitement or agitation of mind.

I perceive that you meet with all the seasons of the year in your soul; that sometimes you feel the winter of manifold barrenness, detraction, sadness, and weariness; sometimes the dews of the month of May, with the odour of the holy flowers; sometimes the summer-heats of the desire of pleasing our good God. There only remains autumn, of the fruits of which, as you say, you do not see much; but it very often happens, that in thrashing the corn and pressing the grapes, much greater abundance is obtained than the harvest and the vintage seemed to promise.

You would be very glad if it were all spring and summer; but no, there must be vicissitudes within as well as without. In heaven, indeed, all will be spring as to beauty, all autumn as to enjoyment, all summer as to love; there will be no winter. But here the winter is required for the exercise of self-denial, and of a thousand little virtues which are exercised in the time of sterility.

Let us always go on in our steady pace: provided that we have a good and resolute affection, we cannot but go on well. No, there is no need, in order to the exercise of the virtues, to keep one's attention always actually fixed upon all of them: that would in truth embarrass your thoughts and affections. Humility and charity are the great cords to which all the others are fastened; it is only necessary to hold well to those two; one of them is the lowest, and the other the highest: the preservation of the whole edifice depends on the foundation and the roof. Keeping the heart attentive to the exercise of these, one has no great difficulty in dealing with the others. These are the mothers of the virtues, which follow them as infants follow their mother.

Indeed, I do strongly approve of your teaching school. God will be pleased with you for it; for He loves the little ones. And as I said the other day at Catechism, to induce our ladies to take pains with the girls, the guardian angels of little children love with a particular affection those who bring them up in the fear of God, and who insinuate holy devotion into their tender souls; as, on the contrary, our Lord threatens those who scandalise them with the vengeance of their angels. (St. Matt. xviii. 10; and St. Mark ix. 41.)

Ah, my God! how much I owe to that Saviour who loveth us so much! How would I wish once for all to embrace Him, and to clasp Him to my heart! May Jesus for ever be in our hearts; may He live and reign there eternally! Ever-blessed be His holy Name, and that of His glorious mother. Amen. Live Jesus, and die the world, if it wills not to live unto Jesus. Amen.

### CHAPTER LIII.

#### WHAT IS MEANT BY LIVING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT AND ACCORDING TO THE FLESH.

To live according to the spirit, is to live, speak, and act according to the virtues which are in the spirit, and not according to the senses and sentiments which are in the flesh. We ought to make use of the latter, to reduce them to subjection, and not to live according to them; but as for these spiritual virtues, we ought to serve them, and to subject to them every thing else.

What are these virtues of the spirit? It is faith, which shews us truths raised altogether above the senses; hope, which makes us aspire to invisible good; charity, which makes us love God more than

all, and our neighbours as ourselves, not with a sensual or natural, or interested love, but with a love pure, solid, and invariable, which has its foundation in God.

Do you see? The human sense resting on the flesh, often causes us not sufficiently to throw ourselves into the hands of God, imagining to ourselves that, because we are worth nothing, God cannot regard us; because men who live according to human wisdom despise those who are not useful to them: on the contrary, the spirit, resting on faith, encourages itself in the midst of difficulties, because it knows well that God loves, supports, and succours the wretched, provided that they hope in Him.

Moreover sense would have a share in every thing that passes; and it loves itself so much, that it fancies nothing is good unless it meddles in the matter. The spirit, on the contrary, attaches itself to God; and says often, that whatever is not God is nothing to it: and since, out of charity, it takes part in the things which are imparted to it, so, from renunciation and humility, it voluntarily gives up its part in things which are concealed from it.

To live according to the spirit, is to love according to the spirit; to live according to the flesh, is to love according to the flesh. For love is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. Suppose a person is very amiable in disposition and pleasing in manners, and I have an affectionate regard for that person; suppose a person loves me well, and places me under great obligations, and I shew a return of affection for that reason; who does not see that I am loving, not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh? For even brute creatures, which have no soul, but only flesh and sensation, love their benefactors and those who are kind and agreeable to

them. Another person is rude, rough, and uncivil ; but after all is very devout, and even anxious to acquire gentler and sweeter manners ; and so, not from any pleasure or interest I have in the acquaintance, I enter into that person's society, do him services, and shew kind feeling and friendship towards him. This love is according to the spirit, for the flesh has no part in it.

I have no confidence in myself, and I would willingly be allowed to live according to this inclination. Who does not see that this is not living according to the spirit ? Certainly it is not ; for when I was quite young, and had no experience at all, I already shewed that disposition. But although, by my natural temper, I am fearful and timid, nevertheless I wish to try and overcome these natural failings, and, little by little, to do well every thing appertaining to that office which obedience, derived from God, has imposed upon me. Who does not see that this is to live according to the spirit ?

To live according to the spirit, is to do the actions, say the words, and produce the thoughts which the Spirit of God demands of us ; and when I say produce the thoughts, I mean those which are voluntary. I am sad, and I do not choose to speak : parrots act in this way. I am sad ; but since charity requires me to speak, I will do so : spiritual persons act in this way. I am overlooked or despised, and I am annoyed at it : peacocks and monkeys shew this disposition. I am overlooked or despised, and I rejoice at it : the Apostles shewed this disposition. (Acts v. 41.)

To live, therefore, according to the spirit, is to do what faith, hope, and charity teach us, whether in things temporal or in things spiritual.

## CHAPTER LIV.

GOD THINKS OF US, AND LOOKS ON US WITH LOVE, IN SPITE OF OUR WEAKNESSES.

You ask me if our Lord thinks of you, and if He looks upon you with love? Yes, He thinks of you, and not only of you, but of the least hair of your head. (St. Matt. x. 30; Acts xxvii. 34.) It is an article of faith; we must in nowise doubt of it. But I also know well that you do not doubt of it: but you only express in this way the aridity, the dryness, and insensibility in which the inferior part of your soul just now finds itself. *Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not*, said Jacob (Genesis xxviii. 16); that is to say, I did not perceive it, I had no feeling of it, it did not seem to me to be so.

And as to God's looking on you with love, of this you have no reason to doubt; for He lovingly beholds the most horrible sinners in the world, little true desire as they have of conversion. What! tell me, have you not the intention of belonging to God? do you not desire to serve Him faithfully? And who gives you this desire and this intention, if not Himself, with His loving regard?

You ought not to examine whether your heart is pleasing to Him; but you certainly ought to examine whether His heart is pleasing to you; and if you look upon His heart, it will be impossible for it not to please you; for it is a heart so gentle, so sweet, so condescending, so loving towards frail creatures, provided they acknowledge their misery, so gracious towards the miserable, so good towards the penitent; and who would not love this royal heart, so full of tenderness for us?

You say well that these temptations happen to you, because your heart is without tenderness to-

wards God ; for it is true, that if you had tenderness, you would have consolation ; and if you had consolation, you would not be in sorrow. But the love of God does not consist in consolation or in tenderness, else our Lord did not love His Father, when He was sorrowful even unto death, and when He cried out : *My God ! My God ! why hast Thou forsaken Me ?* (St. Matt. xxvii. 46.) But it was, nevertheless, then that He made the greatest act of love that it is possible to imagine.

No doubt we would like always to have a little consolation and sugar on our food ; that is to say, to have the sentiments of love and tenderness, and consequently consolation : but we must submit with patience to belong not to the angelic nature, but to the human. Our imperfections ought not to please us ; on the contrary, we ought to say with the holy Apostle : *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?* (Rom. vii. 24.) But this ought neither to astonish us, nor to take away our courage : we even ought to derive from it submission, humility, and mistrust of ourselves, but not discouragement, nor affliction of heart, much less mistrust of the love of God towards us ; for God indeed loves not our imperfections and our venial sins ; but He loves us well, notwithstanding those sins. Thus, as the weakness and infirmity of a child is not pleasing to its mother, but for all that she not only does not cease on that account to love it, but loves it tenderly and with compassion ; so, although God loves not our imperfections and our venial sins, He does not fail to love us tenderly ; whence David had reason to say to God : *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.* (Ps. vi. 3.)

Now, that is enough ; live cheerfully : our Lord looks upon you, and looks upon you with love, and

with so much the more tenderness, because you are weak. Never allow your mind voluntarily to nourish contrary thoughts; and when they do occur to you, do not look at them themselves: turn away your eyes from their iniquity, and return to God with a courageous humility, to speak to Him of His unspeakable goodness with which He loveth us, poor, abject, and weak as we are.

### CHAPTER LV.

THAT WE OUGHT TO CONQUER OUR EVIL INCLINATIONS WITHOUT DISTRESSING OURSELVES ABOUT THEM.

I see clearly that swarm of inclinations which self-love feeds, and pours over your heart; and I know full well that the temper of your mind, subtle, delicate, and active, contributes something to this: but for all that, they are nothing whatever but inclinations, and since you feel that they distress you, and your heart bewails them, there is no appearance they are accepted by any consent, or at least by deliberate consent.

No, your dear soul having conceived the great desire with which God has inspired it, of being none but His, do not readily believe that it lends its consent to these contrary movements. Your heart may be agitated by the feeling of its passions, but I think that it rarely sins with consent. *Unhappy man that I am*, said the great Apostle, *who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* (Rom. vii. 24.)

He was conscious of an army composed of his feelings, aversions, habits, and natural inclinations, which had conspired his spiritual death: and because he fears them, he shews that he hates them; and because he hates them, he cannot support them without sorrow, and his sorrow makes him break out into

that vehement exclamation, to which he himself makes answer, that *the grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord* will deliver him; not from fear, not from fright, not from alarm, not from the combat, but from defeat, and will save him from being vanquished.

To be in this world, and not to feel these movements of passion, are incompatible things. Our glorious St. Bernard says, that it is heresy to say that we can persevere in the same state here below; inasmuch as the Holy Ghost has said by the mouth of Job, in speaking of man, that he *never continueth in the same state.* (Job xiv. 2.) This serves for an answer to what you say of the levity and inconstancy of your soul; for I believe firmly that it is continually agitated by the blasts of its passions, and that consequently it is always in agitation: but I also believe firmly that the grace of God, and the resolution which it has given you, remains continually at the point of your spirit, where the standard of the cross is always flying, and where faith, hope, and charity are always loudly proclaiming, Live Jesus!

Do you see, these inclinations of pride, of vanity, and of self-love, intermeddle every where, and intrude their ideas, with or without our perceiving it, into almost all our actions? but for all that they are not the motives of our actions. St. Bernard, feeling one day that they were troubling him whilst he was preaching, "Depart from me, Satan," said he; "I did not begin for thee, I will not end for thee."

I have only one remark to make on your writing to me; and that is, that you foster your pride by affectation in your conversation and in your letters. In conversation certainly, affectation enters so insensibly that one scarcely perceives it; but still, if one does perceive it, one ought immediately to change one's manner; but in letters, this fault is, in truth, a

little, or rather a great deal less to be tolerated, for you see better what you are about ; and if in writing you do perceive any notable affectation, you ought to punish the hand which wrote it, by making it write another letter in a different style.

To conclude, I doubt not that amidst so great a number of turnings and windings of the heart, here and there some venial faults will slip in ; but for all that, as they are of a passing nature, they do not deprive us of the fruits of our resolutions, but only of the sweetness which there would be in not falling into those faults at all, if the condition of this life allowed of it.

Furthermore, be just : neither excuse nor accuse your poor soul, except on ripe consideration ; for fear that, if you excuse it without good grounds, you may make it insolent ; and if you accuse it inconsiderately, you may lower its courage and make it pusillanimous. Proceed with simplicity, and you will proceed with confidence. Do not burden your feeble body with any other austerities but those which the rule imposes on you. Preserve your bodily strength to serve God in those spiritual exercises which we are often constrained to lay aside, when we have indiscreetly overburdened the body, which must needs unite with the soul in performing them.

## CHAPTER LVI.

### OF THE TEARS OF PIETY.

As to your not having tears, your heart is not to blame for that ; for the want of them is not owing to any absence of resolution, or of lively desires of loving God, but to the absence of sensible passion, which does not depend upon our heart, but upon other circumstances which are out of our own control. For

just as in this world it is not possible for us to make it rain when we please, or to hinder its raining when we wish it to be fair ; so in devotion it is not in our own power to weep when we please, nor to leave off weeping when an impetuous flood of tears comes upon us. This arises most generally, not from any fault of ours, but from the providence of God, which would have us make our journey by land and through the desert, and not by water, and would have us accustom ourselves to labour and to trouble.

Keep yourself firm in this position, that your heart may be entirely fixed on God ; for there is none better than that. Finally, do not wish for persecutions to try your faithfulness ; for it is better to wait for those which God shall send you, than to wish for them.

## CHAPTER LVII.

### OF SUSPECTED REVELATIONS.

As for the visions, revelations, and predictions of this good daughter, they are in my opinion infinitely suspicious, and more, they are unprofitable, vain, and unworthy of consideration. For, on the one hand, they are so frequent, that that of itself makes them worthy of suspicion ; on the other hand, they imply manifestations of certain things which God very rarely reveals, such as the assurance of eternal salvation, the confirmation in grace, the degree of holiness of various persons, and a hundred other matters of the like kind, which serve no purpose whatever. There is a case in point afforded by St. Gregory, who being asked by a lady of honour belonging to the court of the empress, who was called Gregoria, concerning the state of her future salvation, replied : “ My daughter, you ask me a question which is alike difficult and unprofitable.”

Now to say that hereafter we shall know why these revelations are made, is a pretext which the maker of them adopts to avoid the blame attaching to the unprofitableness of such things.

Another consideration is, that when God wills to accomplish His purposes by means of revelations given to His creatures, He ordinarily causes to go before them either true miracles, or a very special holiness in those who receive them: and so the evil spirit, when he wishes notably to deceive some person, before making him utter false revelations, he causes him to make false presages, and to carry on a course of life of false holiness.

In the time of the blessed sister Mary of the Incarnation, there was a daughter of humble rank who was deceived by the most extraordinary deception which it is possible to imagine. The enemy, in the shape of our Lord, for a very long time said the divine office with her, in so melodious a chant that it kept her in a perpetual ecstasy; he communicated her very frequently under the semblance of a resplendent and silvery cloud, through which he caused a false host to come to her mouth; he made her live without eating any thing; when she carried alms to the gate, he multiplied the bread in her apron; so that if she only carried bread for three persons, and there were thirty at the gate, she had sufficient to give abundance to all, and bread of the most delicious taste, portions of which were sent to various places by way of devotion.

This daughter had so many revelations, that at last it rendered her suspected. She was sent to reside with the blessed sister Mary of the Incarnation, at that time a married person; where, being a servant, and treated rather harshly by the late Mons. —, it was discovered that she was by no means a saint, and

there was nothing in the world in her but a heap of false visions.

Nevertheless, as I told you, you ought not to ill treat this poor girl, but only shew to her a total neglect and a perfect contempt for all her revelations and visions, without amusing yourself either with refuting or combating them; but, on the contrary, when she wishes to speak of them, you must put her off, that is, change the subject of conversation, and speak to her of solid virtues and of the perfection of the religious life, and particularly of the simplicity of the faith, by which saints have gone forward without visions or particular revelations.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### OF SENSIBLE GRACE.

When grace makes itself felt in a soul, what is there that soul does not do? Her modesty appears before all the world; she gives an unequalled edification; she makes herself admired by all those who see her; mortifications, she says, cost me nothing: they are to me consolations; obediences are only enjoyments to me: I no sooner hear the first sound of the bell than I am up; I allow myself to neglect no practice of virtue; and all this I do with a very great peace and tranquillity.

But the moment grace ceases to make itself felt, that soul speaks a very different language. Now that I have lost enjoyment in prayer, I have no heart to improve myself; I feel nothing of that ardour I used to feel in my exercises; in a word, frost and chillness have come over me.

Alas, so I thought. See, I pray you, how this poor soul bemoans herself; her discontent even appears on her countenance; she has a downcast and

melancholy expression, and she goes about pensive and out of sorts.

My God, what is the matter with you? one is constrained to say to that soul. Oh, merely that I am so downcast and languid, that nothing can please me, and every thing is wearisome to me; I have almost lost the courage to aim at perfection any longer.

My God, what weakness! consolation fails, and at the same time courage fails. Now we ought not to do so; but the more God deprives us of consolation, the more we ought to labour to shew to Him our fidelity. One single act done in dryness of spirit is worth more than many acts done in consolation; because it is done with a stronger love, though it may not be with a love so tender or so consoling.

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## PART FIFTH.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRINCIPAL FEASTS OF  
THE YEAR.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS.

BEHOLD the dear Infant Jesus, who brings with Him these approaching feasts. And since He is born to come and visit us on the part of His Eternal Father, and since the shepherds and kings will, in their turn, come to visit Him in His cradle, I think you ought to caress Him fondly, shew Him hospitality with all our sisters, sing sweet canticles to Him, and above all, adore Him fervently and sweetly, and in Him His poverty, His humility, His obedience, and His sweetness, in imitation of His most holy Mother and of St. Joseph.

Take from Him one of those dear tears, sweet dew of heaven, and place it on your heart, in order that it may never have any sadness, save such as is pleasing to this sweet Infant. It is marvellous what healing power those tears have over every sort of ill that can befall the heart. I look upon the whole congregation of our sisters as simple shepherdesses watching over their flocks, that is to say, over their affections, who, warned by the Angel, come to do homage to the divine Infant, and as a token of their eternal servitude, offer to Him the finest of their lambs, which is their love, without any reserve or exception.

Let the little Babe of Bethlehem be for ever the delight and love of our heart. Alas, how fair He is! I had a hundred times rather see this dear little Babe in His crib than to see all the kings of the earth on their thrones. O God, I think Him more glorious on this throne, than Solomon was on his throne of ivory. The great St. Joseph makes us share in his consolation; the sovereign Mother in her love; and the divine Infant wills for ever to diffuse His merits over our heart.

Repose near Him as sweetly as you can; He will not fail to love your heart, void as you find it of tenderness and feeling. See you not how He inhales the breath of yon ox and yon ass, which have no feeling or emotion at all? How will He not receive the aspirations of our poor heart, which though not at this moment tenderly, nevertheless steadily and firmly, sacrifices itself at His feet, to be for ever the inviolable servant of Him and of His holy Mother? May the joy and consolation of the Son and of the Mother be for ever the gladness of our soul. Ah, how well it becomes her to dandle that little Babe! but above all I love her charity, which allows whoever will to see, to touch, and to kiss Him. Ask her for Him, she will give Him to you.

O true Jesus, how sweet is this sight! The heavens, as the Church singeth, drop honey on every side; and as for me, I think that those divine angels who make the air resound with their admirable hymns are coming to gather this celestial honey on the lilies where it is found on the breast of the most sweet Virgin and of St. Joseph. How sweet to behold the honey suck the milk!

What shall we give to our little King, which we have not received from Him and from His divine liberality? I will give Him, then, our heart. Ah,

Saviour of our souls, make it all of gold in charity, all of myrrh in mortification, and all of frankincense in prayer; and then receive it into the arms of Thy holy protection, and let Thine heart say to it: I am thy salvation for ever and ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER II.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

I fancy I see you around the Babe of Bethlehem, kissing His feet, and supplicating Him to be your King. Abide there, and learn of Him how meek and humble He is, how simple and amiable. Let your heart, like a mystical bee, never abandon this little King; and let it make its honey round about Him, in Him, and for Him; and let it press Him to itself, Him whose lips are all steeped in graces.

Nothing will be wanting to you, since you will be in the presence of that holy Infant. My God, how that Nativity makes holy affections to be born in our soul, but above all, perfect abnegation of the goods, the pomps, the satisfactions of this world!

I know not how it is, but I find no mystery which mingles so sweetly tenderness with austerity, love with rigour, sweetness with sharpness.

Never was seen a poorer or a happier birth; never so noble or so blessed a mother. Certainly she who is the Mother of the Son of God needs not ask the world for exterior consolations.

This is why St. Paula loved better to live a stranger in Bethlehem, than to remain a rich lady in Rome; imagining to herself that day and night she heard in her dear retreat the infantine cries of the Saviour in the crib, or, as St. Francis says, those of the dear Babe of Bethlehem, who incited her to the contempt of worldly grandeurs and affections, and

called her to the most holy love of abjection. You are, then, near this holy crib, in which the Saviour of our souls teaches us so many virtues by His silence; for what is there that He saith not in keeping silence? His little heart beating with love for us may well inflame ours.

But see you how lovingly He has written your name in the depth of His divine heart, which beats on that couch of straw from the impassioned zeal it has for our advancement, and heaves not one single sigh unto His Father in which you have not a part, nor a single movement of the spirit except for your happiness.

The magnet attracts iron; amber attracts bits of straw and hay. Whether, then, that we are iron because of our hardness, or straw because of our weakness, we ought to join ourselves to this little Infant King, who truly draws all hearts unto Himself.

Yes, return we no more to the region whence we set out. Leave we for ever Arabia and Chaldæa, and abide we at the feet of this Saviour. Let us say with the heavenly Spouse: *I found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him, and I will not let Him go.* (Cant. iii. 4.)

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE END OF THE YEAR.

I conclude this year with the satisfaction of being able to present you with the wish I make for you for the year which is coming.

They pass away, then, these temporal years. Their months reduce themselves to weeks, the weeks to days, the days to hours, and the hours to moments, which are all that we possess, but which we only possess in proportion as they perish, and render our duration

perishable. And yet that duration ought to be more pleasing to us for that very reason ; because this life being full of miseries, we could not have in it any more solid consolation than that of being assured that it is vanishing away, to make room for that holy eternity which is prepared for us in the abundance of the mercy of God, and to which our soul incessantly aspires by the continual thoughts its own nature suggests to it, although it cannot hope for it except by other more elevated thoughts which the Author of its nature diffuses over it.

Certainly I never turn my thoughts to eternity without much sweetness. For, say I, how is it that my soul could extend its thoughts to this infinity, if it had not some sort of proportion with it. But when I feel that my desire runs after my thoughts on this same eternity, my joy takes a new and incomparable increase ; for I know that we never entertain a real desire for any thing except possibilities. My desire, then, assures me that I can have eternity : what more remains for me than to hope that I shall have it ? and this hope is given me by the knowledge of the infinite goodness of Him who would not have created a soul capable of thinking and of aiming at eternity, if He had not willed to give it all the means of attaining thereto.

Let us, then, often say, Every thing passes away ; and after the few days of this mortal life which remain for us, will come the infinite eternity. Little matters it, then, to us that we have here comforts or discomforts, provided that for all eternity we are blessed. Let this holy eternity which awaits us be our consolation, and to be Christians, members of Jesus Christ, regenerated in His blood ; for in this alone consists all our glory, that this divine Saviour has died for us.

A great soul reaches all its best thoughts, affections, and aims onwards into the infinity of eternity ; and since it is eternal, it reckons as too short whatever is not eternal, as too little whatever is not infinite ; and raising itself above all the delights, or rather those poor amusements which this life can present to us, it keeps its eyes fixed on the immensity of the goods and of the years of eternity.

O God, wherefore shall we live next year, if it be not to love better this sovereign goodness ? Oh, how it takes us from this world, or takes this world from us ; how it makes us die, or makes us better love its death than our life !

Now I wish for your dear soul, that this next year may be followed by many others, and they may all be profitably employed in the conquest of eternity.

Live long, holily, happily here below, amid these perishable moments, to live again eternally in that immutable felicity to which we aspire.

But if our Lord hears my prayers, this year will be to you a year of prosperity, of contentment, and of blessings on yourself, in yourself, and on all around you ; and you will see a long succession of like years, which at length will terminate in the eternal year, in which you will immortally enjoy the Author of all true prosperity and benediction.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE END AND THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR.

Behold the year about to engulf itself in the abyss where all the others up to the present have been annihilated.

Oh, how desirable is eternity at the price of these miserable and perishable vicissitudes ! Let us allow time to glide away, whilst we ourselves are gliding

away, little by little, to be transformed into the glory of the children of God.

Alas, when I think how I have employed the time of God, I am much troubled that He wills not to give me His eternity; since He wills not to give it, except to those who use His time well.

O God, these years are going away, and run imperceptibly in file one after another; and in winding up their durations, they wind up our mortal life, and in ending they end our days.

Oh, how incomparably more desirable is eternity, since its duration is without end, and its days without night, and its contentments invariable! May you possess this admirable good of the holy eternity in as high a degree as I wish it for you! What happiness for my soul, if God, taking compassion on it, were to make it see this sweetness!

But whilst waiting to see our glorified Saviour, let us see Him with the eyes of faith all humbled in His cradle.

Ought we not to praise God for the many graces that we have received, and to supplicate Him to diffuse the blood of His circumcision over the entrance of the coming year, that in it the destroying angel may have no access over us?

So be it, that through these transitory years we may happily arrive at the permanent year of the most holy eternity!

Let us, then, well employ these little perishable moments in exercising ourselves in the holy sweetness and humility which the circumcised Babe comes to teach us, in order that we may have part in the effects of His divine Name.

Might we at least for once well pronounce that sacred Name of our heart! Oh, what balm it would diffuse over all the faculties of our soul!

How happy we would be to have in our understanding nought but Jesus, in our memory nought but Jesus, in our will nought but Jesus, nought but Jesus in our imagination! Jesus would be every where in us, and we every where in Him. Let us attempt this, let us pronounce that Name as often as we can. But if as yet we can only say it stammering, at last we shall nevertheless be able to pronounce it well.

But what means it to pronounce this sacred Name well? for you tell me to speak plainly to you. Alas, I know not how, but I only know that to express it well would need a tongue all of fire; that is to say, it must be by divine love only, which, without any other, expresses Jesus in our life, by imprinting Him in the depths of our heart. But courage; doubtless we shall love God, for He loveth us.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

O Jesus, fill our heart with the sacred balm of Thy divine Name, that the sweetness of its odour may dilate itself over all our senses, and diffuse itself over all our actions. But to make this heart capable of receiving so sweet a dew, circumcise it, O Jesus, and retrench from it every thing that would be displeasing to Thy holy eyes.

O glorious Name, which the mouth of the heavenly Father hath eternally named, be Thou for ever graven on our soul, that, as Thou art a Saviour, it may be eternally saved. O holy Virgin, who wert the first of the human race to utter this Name of salvation, inspire us with the way of fitly uttering it, so that every thing in us may breathe of that salvation which thy womb has borne for us.

I could not but write the first letter of this year

to our Lord and to our Lady; and here is the second, in which I wish you a good year, and dedicate our heart to the divine Goodness. May we so live this year, that it may serve as a foundation for the eternal year! At least this morning, on waking, I cried out in your hearing: "Live, Jesus!" and I would that I could diffuse that holy oil over the whole face of the earth.

When balm is closely fastened in a phial, no one can tell what liquid it is, except him who put it there; but when we open the phial, and have sprinkled a few drops, every one says, It is balm. Our dear little Jesus was all full of this balm of salvation; but they knew it not till with that sweetly cruel knife they opened His divine flesh, and then they knew that He is all balm, and balm of salvation. This is why St. Joseph and our Lady, and those all who stood by, began to cry: Jesus, which means Saviour.

May that divine Infant be pleased to steep our hearts in His blood, and to perfume them with His holy love; so that the roses of the good desires which we have conceived may be all empurpled with His dye, and all odoriferous with His balm.

A good and most holy year be given to us, all perfumed with the Name of Jesus, all steeped in His sacred blood; with the abundance of the grace of the Eternal Father, of the peace of the circumcised Son, and of the consolation of the Holy Ghost, to consecrate all the moments thereof, to make an entire circumcision of our heart, and to apply it to receive purely and perfectly the sacred love which the heavenly and divine Name of Jesus proclaims to us, written with His blood on His holy humanity.

A thousand times let us kiss the feet of this Saviour, and let us say to Him: O my God, *my heart hath said to Thee; my face hath sought Thee* (Ps.

xxvi. 8) : that is to say, let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ to consider Him, our mouth to praise Him, and in fine, let our whole face breathe nought but the desire of pleasing our dear Jesus ; Jesus, for whom we must humble ourselves, must endeavour, and labour, and suffer, and, as St. Paul says, *be accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* (Rom. viii. 36.) May no day of this year, nor even any year, nor any day of many years, pass without being bedewed with the virtue of this blood, and without receiving the sweetness of the sound of this Name, which diffuses the height of all sweetness : may also the drops of the blood of our little Saviour convert themselves into a flame of holiness, to rejoice our hearts and render them fruitful.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY.

Our Lord loves you, and loves you tenderly. But if He does not make you feel the sweetness of His holy love, it is to make you more humble and more abject in your own eyes. But do not on that account fail to have recourse with all confidence to His holy goodness, above all now at this time, when we represent Him as He was a little infant in Bethlehem ; for, my God, wherefore does he take this sweet and amiable shape of a little infant, unless to engage us to love Him confidently, and lovingly to trust in Him ? Abide very near the crib this holy octave. If you love riches, you will there find the gold which the Wise Men have left there ; if you love the odour of honours, you will find there that of the frankincense ; and if you love the daintiness of the senses, you will find there the sweet-smelling myrrh which perfumes the whole manger. Be rich in love for this dear Saviour, honourable in the familiarity with which you

approach Him in prayer, and full of delights in the joy of feeling in your mind the holy inspirations and affections of being His only.

As for your little fits of temper, they will pass away ; or if they do not pass away, it will be for your exercise and mortification. Lastly, since without reserve you wish to be all for God, do not keep your heart in any anxiety, but amidst all the drynesses you may feel, be firm in remaining within the arms of the divine mercy. And as for those apprehensions which occur to you, it is the enemy, who seeing you at present altogether resolved to live in our Lord, without reserve and without exception, will make all sorts of efforts to distress you, and to render the way of holy devotion hard to you. Now you ought, on the contrary, to strengthen your heart by frequent repetition of your protest, that you will never relax yourself ; that you will persevere in your fidelity ; that you love better the hardships of the service of God than the sweetnesses of the service of the world ; that you will never abandon your Spouse. Be very careful not to omit holy meditation, for if you did, you would be the sport of your adversary ; but continue constantly in that holy exercise, and wait until our Lord speaks to you : for He will one day speak to you words of peace and consolation, and then you will know that your trouble has been well bestowed and your patience profitable. Let it be your glory to be all for God, and often protest that you are all His.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD.

How sweet it was yesterday to consider the holy Virgin, with the little Infant Jesus whom she goes to

present at the Temple with that pair of doves, happier, as it seems to me, than the greatest princes of the world, to have been sacrificed for the Saviour! Ah, who will give us the grace that our hearts may be so one day!

But is not yonder Simeon very glorious in being permitted to embrace that divine Infant? Let us embrace Him also; let us live and die in His sweet embraces. Place this sweet Jesus in your heart, like a Solomon on his throne of ivory; make your soul often approach Him, like a queen of Saba, to hear the sacred words which He inspires, and breathes forth perpetually,

But, mark you, this heart must be of ivory, in purity, in firmness, in dryness; with the humours of the world all dried off, firm in its resolutions, pure in its affections.

Let us leave the world yonder in its worthlessness. Ah, may Egypt with its garlic, its onions, and its flesh-pots, be always to us an object of disgust, that we may so much the more enjoy the delicious manna which our Lord will give us in the desert whereinto we have entered: let Jesus, therefore, live and reign.

You desire to avoid falsehood; that is a great secret for attracting the Spirit of God into our hearts. *Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle?* asks David. He answers, *He that speaketh truth in his heart.* (Ps. xiv. 1, 3.)

I approve much of your speaking little, provided that the little you do speak be spoken graciously and charitably, and not in a melancholy or artificial way. Yes, let your words be few and sweet, few and good, few and simple, few and sincere, few and amiable.

You must from time to time exercise yourself in this abnegation and abjection, and ask it of God in

all your exercises ; but when any other inspiration of love, of union with God, and of confidence shall occur to you, you must by all means put them in practice, without allowing them to be interfered with by the abnegation, to which you will leave its place at the end of the exercise.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

Let us keep, I beseech you, at the foot of the cross, quite lowly. Too happy, if any drop of that balm which distils from every part of it fall into our heart, and if we can gather some of those little herbs which grow all around. Oh, gladly would I discourse to you on the greatness of that blessed Saint whom our heart loves, because he nourishes the love of our heart, and the heart of our love, on these words : *Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to the upright of heart.* (Ps. cxxiv. 4.) O true God, how good must that Saint have been ! how upright of heart, since the Lord did him so much good, having given him the Mother and the Son ! For, having these two charges, he might be the envy of the angels, and might defy all heaven to display more good than he possessed. For what is there among the angels comparable to the Queen of Angels, and in God more than God ? I supplicate this great Saint, who has so often caressed our Saviour, to bestow on you those interior caresses which are necessary for the advancement of your love towards this Redeemer, and to obtain for you an abundance of interior peace, giving you a thousand benedictions. Live, Jesus ; live, Mary ; and live too the great St. Joseph, who so long nourished our Life ! Be Jesus our crown, Mary our honey, and St. Joseph our sweetness.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

I give you joy of our Lord's ascending to heaven, where He lives and reigns, and wills that we live and reign with Him. Oh, what triumph in heaven, and what sweetness on earth! May our hearts be where their treasure is; and may we live in heaven, since our Life is in heaven!

My God, how beautiful is this heaven, now that the Saviour serves for its sun, and His breast for a fountain of love, of which the blessed drink and are satisfied!

Each of them looks within it, and sees there his name written in a character of love, which love alone can read, and which love alone has graven:

Ah, God, shall not our names be there? They will be there doubtless; for though our heart has not love, it has nevertheless the desire of love, and the beginning of love; and is not the holy name of Jesus written on our hearts? And I think that nothing can efface it. We must hope, then, that ours will in turn be written on that of God.

What a blessing, when we shall see those divine characters marked with our eternal happiness!

As for me, I could think of nothing else this morning than that eternity of good which awaits us; but in which all would seem to me little or nothing, if it were not for that love of the great God, which reigns there eternally, inviolable, and active for evermore.

My God, how strange a contrariety is it in me, to have thoughts so pure and actions so defective! for truly it seems to me, that amidst the pains of hell there would be paradise, if the love of God could be

there; and if the fire of hell were a fire of love, it seems to me that all its torments would be desirable.

I said, this morning, that all the enjoyments of heaven are a mere nothing compared with this reigning love.

But whence is it that I love not well, since henceforth I have the power of loving well?

Oh, let us pray, let us labour, let us humble ourselves, let us invoke this love to come to us.

Never did the earth see the day of eternity in all its splendour until this holy feast, when our Lord, glorifying His body, made, as I think, the angels long to have such bodies, with the beauty of which the heavens and the sun cannot be compared.

Ah, how blessed are our bodies in expecting one day to participate in so much glory, provided that they serve the Spirit well in this mortal life!

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.

Away from hence, *O north wind; and come, O south wind; blow through my garden, and let the aromatic spices thereof flow.* (Cantic. iv. 16.) Oh, how I long for that gracious wind which comes from the noonday of divine love, that Holy Spirit which gives us the grace to aspire unto Him, and to sigh for Him!

Ah, how glad I should be to give you some present or other; but besides my being poor, it is not convenient that on the day when the Holy Spirit bestows His gifts, we should amuse ourselves with bestowing ours. We ought to attend to nothing but receiving them on the day of this great largess.

My God, what need I have of the spirit of fortitude! For assuredly I am feeble and infirm, in which,

nevertheless, I glory : *that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

May the Eternal Wisdom be for ever in our hearts, that we may taste the treasures of the infinite sweetness of Jesus Christ crucified.

Tell your daughter that, like me, she should glory in her feebleness, which is the very disposition for receiving strength ; for to whom should strength be given but to the feeble ? May that sacred fire which changes every thing into itself, be pleased to transform our heart, in order that it may be no more any thing but love ; and that thus we may be no more lovers, but love.

May it be granted me to receive and to employ well the gift of holy understanding, that I may penetrate more clearly into the holy mysteries of our faith ! For this clear comprehension wonderfully subjects the will to the service of Him whom the understanding so vividly perceives to be all good ; and in the contemplation of whom it is occupied and busied. So that, as the understanding can no longer imagine any thing to be good in comparison with that supreme goodness ; in the same way the will can no longer choose to love any goodness in comparison with it. But since, whilst we are in the world, we cannot shew our love except by doing good, because in the world our love must be active rather than contemplative, we have need of counsel, in order to discern what we ought to practise and to do for that love which urges us ; for there is nothing which urges one so to the practice of good as celestial love.

And in order that we may know how we ought to do good, what good we ought to prefer, to what object to apply the activity of love, the Holy Spirit gives to us His gift of counsel.

Behold, now our soul well provided with a good

share of the sacred gifts of heaven. May the Holy Spirit which favours us be for ever our consolation: my soul and my spirit adore Him eternally.

I pray of Him to be always our wisdom and our understanding, our counsel and our fortitude, our knowledge and our godliness; and to fill us with the spirit of the fear of the eternal Father.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

It is true I was a little tired in body; but how could I be so in spirit and heart, after having held on my breast, and close to my heart, the divine Saviour, as I did that morning, all through the procession!

Alas! if I had had my heart well hollowed out by humility, and well abased by abjection, I should without doubt have attracted that sacred pledge to myself. It would have hidden itself within me; for such love does It bear for those virtues, that It violently darts itself thither where It sees them.

My God, how much I was moved when they chanted those words: *My Beloved to me, and I to Him* (Cantic. ii. 16); and those of the Spouse: *Put me as a seal upon Thy heart!* (viii. 6.) Alas! yes; but having taken away the seal, I do not see the impression of its device upon my heart.

Again, what consolation I felt on hearing them sing: *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever* (St. John vi. 52); and they repeated it frequently. O God! yes; we must hope very assuredly that we shall live eternally.

He who receives the most holy Communion, receives Jesus Christ living. This is why His body, His soul, and His divinity are in that divine Sacra-

ment; and inasmuch as His divinity is the very same as that of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, who are but one God with Him, he who receives the most holy Eucharist, receives the body of the Son of God; and by consequence His blood and His soul, and the holy Trinity. But, nevertheless, this divine Sacrament is primarily instituted that we may receive the body and blood of our Saviour, with His vivifying life; as garments which primarily cover the body, inasmuch as the soul is united to the body, do by consequence cover the soul, the understanding, the memory, and the will.

Go on very simply in this belief, and often salute the heart of this divine Saviour, who, to testify His love for us, has willed to veil Himself under the appearances of bread, in order to abide most familiarly and most intimately within us, and nigh to our heart.

Let us often in spirit behold the holy angels who surround that most holy Sacrament to adore It; and during this holy octave diffuse more abundantly holy inspirations on those who approach thereto with humility, reverence, and love.

Those divine spirits will teach you what to do in order to celebrate these solemn days well; and, above all, interior love will make you know how great is the love of our God, who, the more to give Himself to us, has willed to give Himself as food for the spiritual health of our hearts, to the end that, by receiving that nutrition, they might become more perfect.

*Thoughts of St. Francis de Sales regarding the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

Oh, how I long that this heart of our Saviour may be the King of all our hearts!

His heart is so large, He wills that ours should have a place in it.

I hope that you will be like the dove *in the clefts of the rock* (Cantic. ii. 14), and in the pierced side of our dear Saviour; I will gladly try to be often there with you. God, of His sovereign goodness, grant you this grace. Yesterday I saw you, as I think, when, beholding the side of our Saviour open, you wished to take His heart to place it in your own, as it were a king in his little kingdom; and although His heart is greater than yours, nevertheless it contracted so as to accommodate itself to the straitened room. How good is this Lord! How loving is His heart! Let us remain there in that holy abode. May that Heart live always in our hearts; may that Blood always gush in the veins of our souls.

Let us lift up our heart; let us look on that of God, all good, all love for us. Let us adore and bless His will in every thing; let Him cut and wound us all over as He pleases; for His we are to eternity. O beautiful Sun of hearts, Thou vivifiest all things with the rays of Thy goodness! Behold us half-dead before Thee; we will not depart till we have been warmed by Thy heat, Lord Jesus.

Often salute the heart of this divine Saviour, who, to testify His love for us, has willed to veil Himself under the appearances of bread, in order to abide most familiarly and most intimately within us, and nigh to our heart.

May our Saviour pluck out your heart to give you His own most divine Heart, through which you may live altogether according to His holy love. What happiness if, some day, on coming away from holy Communion, I found my own worthless and miserable heart taken out of my breast, and that in its place was fixed the precious heart of my God! But at least my desire is that our poor hearts may not henceforth live any more except under the obedience and the

commandments of the Heart of this Lord ; and thus we shall be sweet, humble, and charitable, since the heart of our Saviour has no laws dearer to it than those of sweetness, of humility, and of charity.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST.

Alas, why have I not some worthy feeling of joy for this angelic man, or this human angel, whose nativity we are celebrating ! My God, would that I might have sweetness to converse with myself upon it ! But I declare to you that the greatness of the subject hinders me from attaining that satisfaction.

I find him more than virgin ; because he is virgin even in his eyes, with which he never beheld aught save the insensible objects of the desert ; more than confessor, for he confessed the Saviour before the Saviour had confessed Himself ; more than preacher, for he preaches not only with the tongue, but with the hand and finger, which is the height of perfection ; more than doctor, for he preaches without having heard the source of doctrine, and without having learnt from masters, but from trees and stones, as St. Bernard says ; more than martyr, for the other martyrs die for Him who died for them ; but he dies for Him who is still in life ; more than evangelists, for he preached the Gospel before it had been delivered ; more than apostle, for he went before Him whom the apostles follow ; more than prophet, for he shews Him whom the prophets predict ; more than patriarch, for he sees Him in whom they believed ; lastly, more than angel and more than man, for the angels are only spirits without bodies ; and men have too much body and too little spirit : he has a body, and yet is nothing but spirit.

I delight extremely in looking upon him in that gloomy but blessed desert, every part of which he perfumes with the odour of devotion, and in which he scatters day and night discourses and ecstatic converse before the great object of his heart,—that heart which, seeing itself left alone to enjoy in loneliness the presence of its love, finds in loneliness the multitude of eternal sweetnesses ; there where he sucks the celestial honey, which he shall presently go to distribute to souls about the banks of Jordan.

He is born of a barren mother, he lives in the deserts, he preaches to the barren and stony heart, he dies among the martyrs ; and amidst all these sharpnesses, he has a heart all full of grace and benediction.

His food is admirable ; for the honey signifies the sweetness of the contemplative life, all collected on the flowers of the holy mysteries. The locusts signify the active life ; for the locust never walks on the earth, nor does it ever fly in the air, but strangely mingling both, sometimes it is seen to leap, and sometimes to touch the earth in order to regain the air. For those who lead the active life, as it were, leap into the air and touch the earth alternately. The locust lives on dew, and does nothing but sing. Now although, according to our condition as mortals, we must needs touch the earth, to set in order the affairs of this life, nevertheless our heart ought to taste nothing but the dew of the good pleasure of God in all this, and ought to refer all to the glory of God.

But what means this terrestrial angel by being clothed with camel's hair ? The camel, hunch-backed, and fit to carry burdens, signifies the sinner. Alas, good as Christians may be, they should remember nevertheless that they are surrounded with sins. Ah,

a vesture how well-fitted to preserve holiness is the robe of humility!

He is buried in solitude by obedience, waiting until he be called to come to the people. He keeps himself aloof from the Saviour, whom he knew and saluted with affection, in order that he may not keep himself aloof from obedience, knowing well that to find the Saviour, apart from obedience, is to lose Him altogether.

His mother is barren, in order to teach us that drynesses and barrenness fail not to produce in us holy grace; for the name John signifies grace. My God! let us eat both of the wild and the garden honey; let us gather this holy love on every occasion; for all things cry out to the hearing of our heart: Love, love! O holy love, come then, and do thou alone of all things possess our hearts.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE FEAST OF ST. PETER.

Our great St. Peter, awakened from his sleep by the angel, gives us his blessing. How much sweetness there is in the history of his deliverance! For his soul is so amazed at it, that he knows not if it be a dream or if it be not a dream.

May our angel strike us on the side to-day, to awaken our loving attention to God, to deliver us from all the chains of self-love, and to consecrate us for ever to that heavenly love, in order that we may be able to say, *Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me.* (Acts xii. 11.)

*Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?* said that divine Saviour to him. (St. John xxi. 17.) Not that He doubted of it, but for the great pleasure He takes in hearing us often say, and say again, and protest that

we love Him. Love we not the sweet Saviour? Ah! He knows well that if we love Him not, at least we desire to love Him.

But if we do love Him, let us feed His sheep and His lambs; for that is the mark of faithful love.

But on what must we pasture those sheep and those lambs? On love itself; for either they live not, or they live on love. Between their death and love there is no middle course; they must either die or love; for *he that loveth not*, says St. John, *abideth in death*. (1 John iii. 14.)

But know you what our Saviour says to His dear St. Peter? *When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not*. (St. John xxi. 18.) The young scholars in the love of God gird themselves; they take their mortifications as seems to them good; they choose their penance, resignation, and devotion, and do their own will in doing the will of God. But the old masters in that love suffer themselves to be bound and girded by another; and in submitting to the yoke which is imposed upon them, they go by ways they would not choose according to their own inclinations.

It is true that they stretch forth their hands; for in spite of the resistance of their inclinations, they allow themselves to be governed willingly against their will, and they say that *obedience is better than sacrifices* (1 Kings xv. 22); and you see how they glorify God, crucifying not only their flesh but their spirit.

O God, may our Saviour be for ever every thing to us! Keep the heart on high, in the loving bosom of the divine goodness and providence; for that is the place of its repose.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

You will see to-morrow the blessed Virgin, bearing within her the Son of God, about sweetly to engage the mind of her dear and holy spouse, to have permission to make that holy visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

You will see how she bids farewell to her dear neighbours for the three months during which she thinks to remain on the mountains. I think they all part from her with tenderness; for she was so sweet and so amiable, that no one could be in her company without love, or part from her without sorrow.

She undertakes her journey somewhat eagerly; for the evangelist tells us that she went *with haste*. (St. Luke i. 39.) Ah, the first movements of Him whom she has within her womb cannot be made but with fervour! Oh, holy eagerness which troubles not, but which hastens without hurrying us!

The angels make ready to accompany her, and St. Joseph to conduct her affectionately. I would gladly know something of the conversations of those two great souls; for you would take great pleasure in hearing me tell you of it; but I think that the holy Virgin discourses of nothing but of Him whom she bears, and that she breathes not, but of the Saviour. St. Joseph, in like manner, aspires only for the Saviour, who, by secret rays, touches his heart with a thousand marvellous feelings. And as wines stored up in vaults give forth, without being conscious of it, the odour of the flourishing vineyards; so the heart of the holy patriarch gives forth, without being conscious of it, the odour, the vigour, and the strength of the little babe who flourishes in his fair vineyard. O God, how beautiful a pilgrimage!

I leave you to think how good an odour this fair lily diffused in the house of Zachary, during the three months she was there; how each one was all occupied with her, and how with few, but very excellent words, she dropped from her sacred lips precious honey and balm; for how could she pour forth aught but that of which she was full? But she was full of Jesus.

My God, how much I wonder at myself for being still so full of myself, after having so often communicated! Ah, dear Jesus, be the child of our womb, that we may breathe of nothing every where but Thee! Alas! Thou art so often in me, wherefore am I so little in Thee? Thou enterest so often within me, wherefore am I so much without Thee? Thou art in my heart, wherefore am I not in Thine, to gather there that great love which inebriates hearts? I am all engaged with that dear visitation, in which our Lord, as it were new wine, makes this loving affection to gush on every side in the heart of His holy Mother.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION.

I was meditating this evening, as the weakness of my sight would permit, on this queen dying of a fever sweeter than all health; I mean, the fever of love, which drying up her heart, at last enkindles it, sets it all on fire, consumes it in such sort, that she breathes forth her holy soul, which goes straight to the hands of her Son.

Ah, how fair is this dawn of the eternal day, which, ascending towards heaven, goes on, as it seems to me, increasing more and more in the benedictions of its incomparable glory!

All the elect die in the habit of holy love; but

some of them, beyond that, die in the exercise of this holy love ; some, for this love, like the martyrs, and others, by this same love. But what belongs to the supreme degree of this love is, that some die of love ; and that is when love not only wounds the soul, so as to make it languish, but transfixes it, striking in the midst of the heart, and so strongly, that it drives the soul out of the body.

Such was the death of the holy Virgin, of whom it is impossible to imagine that she died of any other sort of death than that of love ; a death the most noble of all, and consequently due to the most noble life which was ever lived among creatures,—a death of which angels themselves would desire to die if they were capable of death.

The holy Virgin having nothing in her which could hinder the operation of the divine love of her Son, united herself with Him in an incomparable union, by sweet ecstasies, peaceful and effortless ; so that the death of this holy Virgin was more gentle than we can possibly imagine, her Son sweetly drawing her by the odour of His perfumes, and she gliding off in this odour most gently into the bosom of His goodness ; and although that holy soul loved her most holy and most pure and most fair body, nevertheless she quitted it without pain and without resistance, to go to reunite herself to her dear Son.

Love having, at the foot of the cross, given this divine mother the supreme dolours of death, it was reasonable that death should give her the sovereign delights of love.

Ah, may it please this holy Virgin to make us live by her prayers in this holy love ; may it be for ever the singular and only object of our heart. Live Jesus ; live Mary, the stay of my life !

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

I live in hope that, if my ingratitude excludes me not from Paradise, I shall one day enjoy the eternal glory, in the enjoyment of which you will be blessed, after having in this life holily borne the cross, which the Saviour has imposed on you in the duty of serving Him faithfully in your own person, and in that of those many dear sisters, whom He has willed to be your daughters in Him. I salute them, those most dear daughters, in the love of the most holy Virgin, on whose cradle I invite them to scatter flowers every morning during this holy octave, holy anxieties to imitate her well; thoughts of serving her for ever, and above all, lilies of purity, roses of ardent charity, with the violets of most sacred and most desirable humility and simplicity.

My God, when shall it be that our Lady shall be born in our heart? As for me, I see plainly that I am in nowise worthy of it: you will think the same of yourself. But her Son was indeed born in a manger. Courage, then; let us make an abode for this holy infant. She loves only places deepened by humility, abased by simplicity, enlarged by charity. She is glad to be near the crib, and at the foot of the cross. She is not troubled if she must go into Egypt, away from all refreshment, provided that she has her dear Babe with her. No, let our Lord turn and return us to the right or to the left; let Him wrestle with us as with Jacob; let Him give us a thousand falls; let Him press us sometimes on one side, sometimes on another; nay, let Him inflict on us a thousand ills, never shall we quit Him for that, till He gives us His eternal benediction. And so our good God never abandons us except to keep us more se-

curely ; He never leaves us, except to guard us better ; He never wrestles with us, except to yield Himself to us and to bless us.

Let us go on, however, and let us travel by these lowly valleys of the humble and little virtues ; there shall we see roses among the thorns, charity which shines forth amidst interior and exterior afflictions, the lilies of purity, the violets of mortification, and what more can I say ? Above all, I love those three little virtues, sweetness of heart, poverty of spirit, and simplicity of life ; and those vulgar exercises, to visit the sick, to attend the poor, to console the afflicted, and such-like ; but all of them without excitement, with a true liberty. No, we have not yet arms long enough to reach to the cedars of Libanus ; let us content ourselves with the hyssop of the valleys.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS AND OF ALL SOULS.

As for these good feasts which are drawing near, you have nothing more to do after the offices of the day than to keep your mind in the heavenly Jerusalem, amidst its glorious streets, where on every side you will hear the praises of God resounding.

Look on all that variety of saints, and inform yourself how they have arrived there ; and you will learn that the Apostles attained thereto principally by love, the martyrs by constancy, the doctors by meditation, the confessors by mortification, the virgins by purity of heart, and all in general by humility.

Look well on those fair streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, where so many blessed ones dwell, where all are rejoicing around their King, and where the love of God, like a heavenly living fountain, diffuses its waters on all sides, which bedew these glorious souls,

and make them bloom, each one according to its condition, with an incomprehensible beauty.

Let our hearts be there, where are these true and desirable pleasures. Live, Jesus! Is not that our watchword? No, nothing shall enter into our hearts which says not in truth, Live, Jesus!

You will also, on All-Souls' day, go in spirit into Purgatory, and you will see those souls full of hope, which exhort you to profit the most you can in piety, that at your departure you may be the less retarded from entering heaven.



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